

Abortion funds are in the spotlight with the likely end of Roe v. Wade: Three findings about what they do

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[Donations to abortion funds](#) are reportedly surging following the leak of a [draft U.S. Supreme Court abortion decision](#) that signaled the imminent

end of legal abortion in much of the country.

There are [at least 90 of these funds](#)—donor-funded, nonprofits that are often staffed by volunteers that help people obtain abortions they can't afford by reducing the cost and assisting with travel, lodging and other services.

Abortion is already inaccessible in many cases due to [restrictive laws in states like Texas](#) and [Mississippi](#) that have left many [counties with no abortion clinics](#) at all. Abortion funds generally partner with providers to help cover some out-of-pocket procedural costs on behalf of the patient, and some funds cover associated expenses such as [travel, child care and lodging for overnight stays](#).

As a social work professor who studies [reproductive health care](#), I have led research that reviewed thousands of case records of patients who requested assistance from [abortion](#) funds to help pay for a procedure that they could not afford.

Here are three main findings from the studies I've conducted so far:

1. Those assisted are likely to be parents

About [20% of the people aided by these funds](#) were 11–19 years old, according to studies I led based on national data collected from 2010–2015. In contrast, only [14% of all people getting abortions](#) are in that age group.

As is the case for all patients who have abortions, more than half of the people getting help from the abortion funds we studied were in their 20s. Only 18% of them were in their 30s, versus 25% of all patients.

My team also found that only 60% of abortion fund patients were single,

compared with 86% of all patients. And we determined that 50% of them were Black, versus 36% overall.

Nearly 60% of patients aided by abortion funds have children. Around 41% have one or two children, as opposed to 46% of all people who got abortions, and 18% of abortion fund patients had three or more children, versus 14% overall.

These findings suggest that younger parents of color were disproportionately affected by abortion barriers during this period.

2. Not all costs covered

My research team found that abortion funds [didn't cover the full cost](#) for patients, or even the entire gap between the cost and what they could afford.

Patients typically requested help to pay for a procedure they expected to cost more than US\$2,200, when patients could only pay an average of \$535. Abortion funds, in turn, were able to pledge an average of \$256 on behalf of each patient.

We also determined that abortion costs were highest for patients age 11–13, at just over an average of \$4,000. Those patients had only an average of \$616 to pay those bills, and they received an average pledge of \$414.

I also participated in [another project](#) that analyzed more detailed data collected from 2001 to 2015 from an abortion fund operating in Florida. These patients faced an average procedural cost of almost \$1,000 and received \$140 in aid from the fund, on average.

When patients have trouble paying for an abortion, it can delay the

procedure. That, in turn, tends to [make it even more expensive](#).

3. Other obstacles include travel and child care

Patients seeking help from abortion funds [face many obstacles](#) besides paying [medical bills](#) that make it hard for them to get the care they were seeking. Another study I led found that the typical abortion fund patient faced [two of these barriers](#).

Common challenges included juggling their parental responsibilities with finding the time and the means to [travel long distances](#) to a provider—including when [mandatory waiting periods](#) require multiple visits. Patients also dealt with unemployment or underemployment and [unstable housing](#).

For full-time students, it could be hard to schedule appointments that would not interfere with their studies.

More demand for help expected

The [National Network of Abortion Funds](#), an umbrella group, estimates that abortion funds helped about 56,000 patients in 2019, the most recent data available.

If the Supreme Court does overturn Roe v. Wade, the justices will be leaving it up to the states whether abortion will be allowed within their borders. [Abortion access will likely decline](#), [increasing costs](#) in many places for [patients who will have to travel to another state](#).

Abortion [funds](#), in turn, are likely to get more requests for support. These groups say they plan to respond by [helping as many people as they can](#).

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