

In divided US, women crisscross country for abortion care

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A year after the US Supreme Court abolished nationwide access to abortion care, many American women are settling into a new reality: arranging costly trips to terminate their pregnancies in states where the

procedure is still allowed.

Comprehensive national abortion statistics are hard to come by in the United States because data is split between [medical facilities](#) and organizations that provide abortion pills by mail.

But a recent study indicates a sharp rise in abortions in states that neighbor those which have moved to ban the procedure following the landmark court decision last summer.

The study, published by the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive health research and [advocacy group](#), earlier this month suggests "that significant numbers of residents of states with abortion bans are traveling to neighboring states for abortion care."

In June 2022, the conservative-dominated Supreme Court overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, which had enshrined a woman's constitutional right to an abortion. Conservative-leaning states celebrated the reversal and proceeded to ban or severely restrict the procedure, while liberal states moved to protect it.

Striking increase

The findings in the Guttmacher study are striking.

New Mexico recorded a 220 percent increase in abortions in 2023 compared to 2020. The southwestern state borders Texas and Oklahoma, which have enacted abortion bans.

The midwestern state of Illinois, whose neighbors Indiana and Missouri have banned the procedure, saw a 69 percent increase in abortions, while in Colorado, surrounded by conservative Wyoming, Utah, Kansas and Nebraska, the figure jumped 89 percent.

The National Abortion Federation has documented the same trend.

"In the last year, we've seen more people than ever traveling to access care," Veronica Jones, the group's chief operating officer, said in June.

The federation says that from July 2022 to May 2023 it helped finance nearly 1,000 plane, train and bus trips for those seeking abortion care—an increase of 235 percent compared to the same period the previous year.

When travel is not possible, some women turn to abortion pills.

Requests by Americans for abortion pills from outside the United States have surged since Roe was struck down, according to a study published in the scientific journal *JAMA* at the end of 2022.

Abortion pills criss-cross state lines domestically as well.

Several liberal states, including New York and Massachusetts, have adopted so-called shield laws meant to protect [health professionals](#) dispensing the pills from being prosecuted and extradited to states where abortion is prohibited.

New York adopted its shield legislation in June this year. Over the next month, Aid Access, a reproductive rights initiative, said it sent abortion pills to 3,500 patients living in states that ban abortion. Since then, the numbers have doubled and continue to increase, according to Linda Prine, a New York based doctor involved with the initiative.

Added financial burden

Isaac Maddow-Zimet, a data scientist at the Guttmacher Institute, said that a number of underlying factors could be at play, noting that abortion

counts have been rising in many states since 2019.

One is that Texas, with a population of 30 million people, began adopting abortion restrictions even before Roe was struck down. Another possible explanation behind the growth in abortion numbers is that the procedure has become more accessible in rural states.

However, "the scale of the increase is such that we are fairly sure that that's being driven by increased travel from the [states](#)" where [abortion](#) is banned or restricted, Maddow-Zimet told AFP.

At the same time, he and other experts insist that the ability to receive professional [abortion care](#) out of state still carries with it a number of additional costs for women, such as taking time off work, organizing childcare and paying for travel and accommodation.

"It represents pretty significant logistical and financial burdens for them," Maddow-Zimet said.

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