

[Subscribe](#) →

# Abortion deserts: America's new geography of access to care – mapped

With the supreme court  
ending the federal right  
to abortion, women will  
face much longer  
journeys for treatment

by [Alvin Chang](#), [Andrew Witherspoon](#) and [Jessica Glenza](#)

---

---

---

Fri 24 Jun 2022 19.01 BST

The supreme court has **overturned** the landmark 1973 decision Roe v Wade, which guaranteed a federal right to abortion.

In its absence, states hostile to abortion are free to ban or severely restrict the procedure. That would leave entire regions of the country without an abortion clinic within a day's drive, reshaping the geography of abortion access in America in a single, seismic shift.

## Abortion won't be accessible for huge swaths of the country

More than half of US states are almost certain or likely to ban abortion now that the supreme court has overturned Roe v Wade. Several states already have abortion bans on the books that would no longer be blocked by Roe v Wade, while others have “trigger laws”, **which are now put in motion** with the federal government no longer protecting reproductive rights.

When those states ban abortion, about a quarter of the country's abortion clinics would close - overwhelmingly in states where clinics are already sparse.

### How abortion deserts will grow with Roe v Wade overturned

Counties' distance from the nearest open abortion clinic

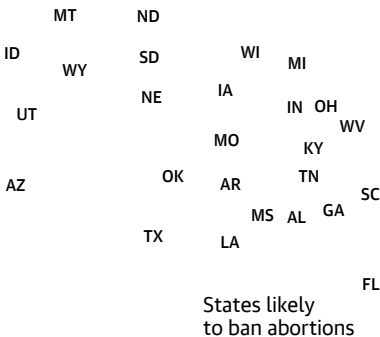
0 25 50 100 200+ miles

With Roe in effect

Open clinic

With Roe overturned

Clinic predicted to close



Guardian graphic. Sources: Clinic locations from the Myers Abortion Facility Database, predicted state bans from the Guttmacher Institute. Distance is calculated from the center of each county to the nearest open clinic.

In Cameron county, at the southern tip of Texas, a woman would need to travel to a clinic more than 680 miles away in New Mexico. On the meandering roads of rural America, that's more than 800 miles: a 12-hour drive.

## Women in some states will have to travel more than 500 miles to the nearest abortion clinic

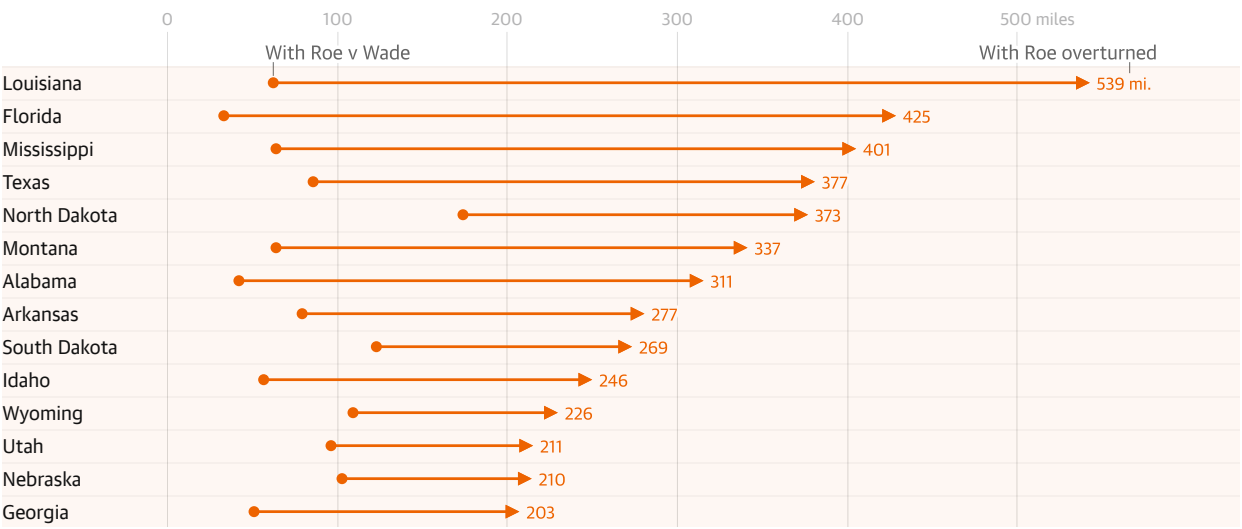
A **2017 study** found that half of US women live within 11 miles (17km) of an abortion clinic, but about 20% of them have to travel 43 miles (68km). Abortion bans in half of US states would drastically increase those travel times, particularly in the south, where a large swath of contiguous states are likely to ban abortion.

### With Roe v Wade overturned, the nearest abortion clinic will likely be hundreds of miles

Farther away for many

For each state, we looked at the median distance from every county to the nearest abortion clinic and how that could change with Roe overturned

☐ States likely to ban abortion



+ Show more

Guardian graphic. Sources: Clinic locations from the Myers Abortion Facility Database, predicted state bans from the Guttmacher Institute. Distance is calculated from the center of each county to the nearest open clinic.

But traveling to another state for an abortion may not even be an option. People who seek abortions are disproportionately likely to have low incomes, and most already have children. Experts also warn that **states may pass laws** to restrict women from traveling out of state to seek abortion services.

# Abortion is legally protected in some states, but that won't stop further restrictions or bans

A handful of states do have legal protections for abortion, either in their constitution or as statutes. While existing abortion laws may not immediately kick with Roe v Wade overturned, Republicans in some of those states are expected to make a push to ban abortion.

## What state laws could go into effect with Roe v Wade overturned?

The laws that could kick in include ones passed before Roe, after Roe and ones that “trigger” now that Roe is reversed

- Abortion bans that could kick in with Roe overturned
- Likely to try to ban abortion
- Abortion legally protected and not currently threatened
- No imminent threat

Guardian graphic. Source: Guttmacher Institute, National Abortion Rights Action League, Center for Reproductive Rights. Laws banning abortion after six weeks are included because that is before many people know they are pregnant. North Carolina has a pre-Roe ban but Guttmacher writes that it may not be "implemented quickly" and Kansas will have a referendum vote on whether abortion is protected in the state.

In Kansas, for example, the constitution protects a woman's right to access abortion, but a **referendum in August** will determine whether that protection will be eliminated. A **poll** earlier this year found that more than 60% of Kansans oppose making abortion completely illegal. But the referendum is part of the primary elections, and **primary voters tend to be more conservative**.

Meanwhile, the Washington Post reports that Republican senators have discussed federal legislation to **ban abortion after six weeks**, called "heartbeat" bills by proponents. Many women don't know they are pregnant until after six weeks, and a **2018 study** found that younger women, women of color and women without college degrees are more likely to find out after the seven-week mark.

Together, these new restrictions could further endanger legal protections in states that support abortion rights.

## More on this story



**Texas supreme court blocks order that allowed abortions to resume**

2d ago



**'Blood on their hands': world's medics condemn US overturn of abortion rights**

24 Jun 2022



**'A slap in the face to women': Nancy Pelosi condemns overturning of Roe v Wade - video**

24 Jun 2022



**Abortion banned in multiple US states just hours after Roe v Wade overturned**

25 Jun 2022



**BBC's critic phrase: Wade**

25 Jun 2022

## More from Headlines



**Revealed / BBC says it received complaints against DJ Tim Westwood**

2h ago



**Chris Pincher / Johnson aware of some claims in February, No 10 admits**

2h ago



**Fuel prices / Protesters block motorways across parts of England and south Wales**

4h ago



**Kellogg's / Firm fails in court challenge against UK high-sugar cereal rules**

1h ago



**Liv Naka Garir Ryba**

4m a

