

CORE BRIEF

Post-*Dobbs* changes in abortion access in Wisconsin and nationally

April 11, 2023



A [new report](#) from a [national abortion counting effort](#) documents continued steep declines in abortion across the U.S. in the six months following the *Dobbs* Supreme Court decision. The 13 states with outright abortion bans and/or other extreme restrictions, including Wisconsin, experienced virtually complete stoppages of abortion care. Findings make clear that thousands of abortion seekers across the country, including in Wisconsin, have been unable to overcome the multiple financial and logistical obstacles to obtaining out-of-state care, leading to either self-managed abortions or forced pregnancies and births.

Study overview

[#WeCount](#) is a national abortion reporting effort led by the [Society of Family Planning](#) and a committee of scientists and healthcare professionals from across the country. It aims to capture the shifts in abortion access, by state, following the June 24, 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* U.S. Supreme Court decision.

The project enrolled 83% of all identified abortion providers in the U.S. Each participant reported the number of abortions they provided each month, starting in April 2022. To develop the most accurate estimates possible, researchers used statistical techniques to account for missing data. (A full description of the methods can be found [here](#).)

[#WeCount](#) had previously reported on the number of abortions between April and August 2022. (Find CORE's brief on the prior report [here](#).) The [latest #WeCount report](#) shares more complete data for April through December 2022, including the full six months following *Dobbs*.

National trends

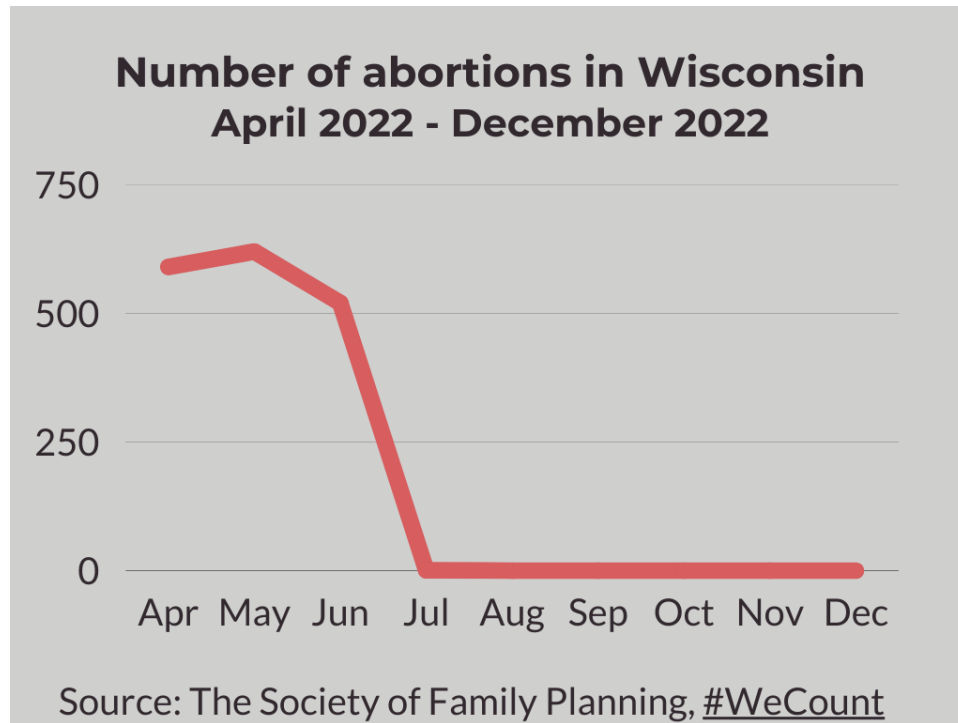
Overall, compared to the months before *Dobbs*, the monthly number of abortions in the U.S. was lower by several thousand—on average, 5,377—every single month between July and December 2022. Cumulatively, investigators found that **32,260 fewer abortions** overall took place during these months. This finding is unsurprising in light of the intimidating barriers faced by those who must travel to less-restrictive states for desired abortion care. Such [barriers](#) include significant out-of-pocket costs for the procedure, lodging, and travel costs; childcare coverage; arranging for time off from work; and emotional costs, including widespread emotional stigma.

Of course, this overall trend hides large differences across states.

Some states with comparatively few abortion restrictions, especially those bordering more restrictive states, witnessed increases in abortions over the study period. Examples include Florida, Illinois, and North Carolina. But in states with bans and/or extreme restrictions, including Wisconsin, an estimated 43,410 fewer people obtained abortions in the six months after *Dobbs*. On average, **in states with bans or restrictions, 7,235 fewer people per month obtained abortions in the six months following *Dobbs***, as compared to April. People in states with abortion bans were forced to travel to another state, to self-manage their abortion, or to continue a pregnancy they did not want.

Wisconsin trends

The #WeCount initiative documented a 100% decrease in abortions in Wisconsin between April and December of 2022. In April and May, Wisconsin abortion providers reported 590 and 620 abortions, respectively, and in June that number fell to 520. In every month following, that number was virtually zero. (Wisconsin's 1849 ban does allow for abortions to "save the life of the mother," and while such abortions have taken place in Wisconsin since the *Dobbs* decision, they are rare. Investigators in the #WeCount study suppressed any counts less than 10 due to identification concerns.)



In other words, in the six months post *Dobbs*, 3,540 fewer abortions overall, or 590 abortions each month, took place in Wisconsin compared to the months leading up to *Dobbs*.

Wisconsin borders several states with fewer abortion restrictions. #WeCount documented an increase in abortions provided in Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan in the six months following *Dobbs* (35%, 20%, and 16% average monthly increase, respectively). Wisconsinites likely represent at least some of the additional patients served in these states after June 2022. However, the national #WeCount findings document that **additional abortions provided in less-restrictive states do *not* make up for the declines in more-restrictive states, including in the Midwest.**

Impact

[Research shows](#) that, compared to those able to obtain desired abortion care, those denied wanted abortions are more likely to experience profound threats to their health and wellbeing, including greater risk for [maternal mortality and morbidity](#), greater risk of intimate partner violence, and greater economic consequences for themselves and their families. These consequences disproportionately affect low-income individuals and communities of color, reproducing [reproductive and social inequities](#).