

THE STATE OF ABORTION IN WISCONSIN

Prepared by the Office of Senator Tammy Baldwin

June 24, 2022, an activist Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and forced Wisconsin to return to an archaic 1849 criminal abortion ban. Suddenly, half of Wisconsinites were stripped of the fundamental right to control their bodies and were unable to receive the health care they needed – forced to travel long distances, face longer wait times for care, or not even be able to obtain the care they needed at all.



Zero abortions took place in Wisconsin abortion clinics between July 2022 and September 2023. **About 1 in 5 Wisconsinites who wanted an abortion and would have obtained one if abortions were provided in the state were unable to receive care.**¹

An estimated **10,000 fewer abortions** were provided over 18 months post-*Dobbs*.²

September 2023, a Dane County Wisconsin circuit court judge ruled that the 1849 law is not enforceable for voluntary abortions, however, the law remains on the books and abortion access remains under dispute and in jeopardy. A single court decision could throw the state once again back to 1849 and Wisconsin women to live under an abortion ban that was passed just one year after Wisconsin became a state and before women had the right to vote.

Currently, women in the Badger State live under a 20-week abortion ban, and those who do not comply risk felony charges and civil liabilities.³ Additionally, Wisconsin law forces women to undergo a medically unnecessary 24-hour waiting period and ultrasound before getting abortion care. **In 69 counties in Wisconsin, there is still not access to abortion care.**

**SAFE
ABORTION**

88%

Despite abortion access returning to the state in late 2023, clinics are only currently providing about half of their pre-*Dobbs* abortion volume.⁴

Only **880 clinician-provided abortions took place in Wisconsin in 2023**, the first full year after the activist Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* – **an 88% decrease since 2020.**⁵



2020
(Pre-Dobbs)



2023
(Post-Dobbs)

Percentage of Wisconsin patients who received out-of-state abortion care

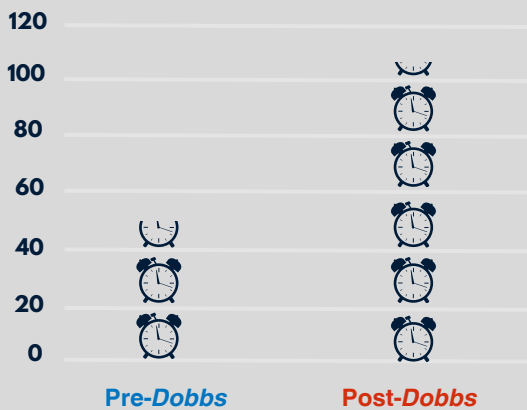
Prior to the *Dobbs* decision, **only 16%, or one in six, of Wisconsin abortion patients received out-of-state care.**⁶

In 2023, **that number was up to 88%**, meaning that nine out of ten patients had to seek out-of-state care.

According to Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, “in many places in Wisconsin, it is easier and quicker to access abortion care in another state which puts a greater strain on those states' abilities to provide care to patients who live in access states, as well as patients from banned states who seek care in access states.”⁷

Wisconsinites who left the state for abortion care primarily received care in Illinois. In 2023, 5,230 Wisconsin patients received care in Illinois.⁸ According to Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPII), Wisconsinites represented the greatest number of patients who have been seen for care post-*Dobbs*.

Minutes traveled to access abortion care



Before the *Dobbs* decision, Wisconsinites traveled an average of **52 minutes** to access abortion care. After the decision, that average nearly doubled to **103 minutes** in September 2022.⁹

Meanwhile, in Illinois, patients seeking abortion care only had to travel an average of **23 minutes** – with no change following the *Dobbs* decision.

Wisconsinites have traveled to Illinois for care from all 72 counties. PPII reports a **750% increase in patients post-Dobbs** – about 250 Wisconsinites per month – and patient volume from Wisconsin remains about three times higher than pre-*Dobbs*. However, only patients who were able to afford the over \$1,000 in average costs to seek out-of-state care, or were able to receive assistance are able to access this care. Many others may have been unable to afford to travel for the care they needed.¹⁰

According to the Chicago Abortion Fund (CAF), they have assisted over 2,000 Wisconsinites seeking care since the *Dobbs* decision. The Fund continues to assist many Wisconsinites since the ban was lifted in Wisconsin due to high in-state wait times stemming from decreased capacity in Wisconsin and the medically unnecessary restrictions that Wisconsin has in place!¹¹

CAF Assistance Provided to Wisconsin Patients

Service	Quantity	Cost
Appointment Cost Pledges	1,134 vouchers sent to clinics	\$594K
Money for gas/parking/tolls	1,057 stipends (525+ people)	\$37K
Hotel/Lodging	393 bookings	\$130K
Train	273 tickets	\$36K
Bus	72 tickets	\$3.4K
Childcare	115 stipends or in-person support	\$6.4K
Food	163 stipends	\$16.5K
Rideshare	426 rides	\$21K

According to PPIL, over the past two years, **\$780,000** in financial assistance has been distributed to Wisconsinites seeking abortion care at PPIL. This support comprises both subsidies for the cost of care, as well as logistical and travel resources. The average amount of assistance per patient is **\$494** in subsidy and **\$248** in travel support.

Seeking care out of state is not a valid solution for people seeking reproductive health care. Abortion bans affect access states, like Illinois, and force patients to wait long periods in order to access the care they need. For example, there are three-week wait times at Illinois clinics due to abortion bans in other states.¹²

Wisconsin is one of many states facing a maternity care crisis. Women in nineteen counties in Wisconsin do not have full access to

maternity care, and 11 counties in the state are a total maternity care desert.^{13,14} Moreover, **11 rural hospitals stopped obstetric services** between 2009 and 2018, and at least another eight have stopped providing obstetric care in the last five years.^{15,16} Many hospitals have cited provider coverage, or workforce shortages, as a key component of their decision to close their obstetric units.

Bans and restrictions only make this problem worse, as they discourage providers from practicing in the state. The Association of American Medical Colleges Research and Action Institute found that for the second year in a row, graduating medical students are less likely to choose residency programs in states with abortion bans or severe abortion restrictions.¹⁷ In Wisconsin, medical schools saw a **10.4% drop** in OB/GYN applications from 2022-23 to 2023-24, and a **6.3% drop** across all specialties during that same time. A study found that **four in five faculty** were concerned that abortion care restrictions would make it more difficult to recruit physician faculty. Researchers also found that medical students are taking the Dobbs decision into account when applying for medical school.¹⁸

“In many areas of the country with maternity care deserts, including Wisconsin, this difficulty in retaining and recruiting providers will only worsen our maternal health crisis. There is less sexual and reproductive health care where it is most desperately needed.”¹⁹

Dr. Allison Linton

Obstetrician and Gynecologist in Milwaukee, WI

Senator Baldwin's Actions to Protect Reproductive Rights

- Senator Baldwin leads the **Women's Health Protection Act**, legislation to guarantee access to abortion, everywhere across the country and restore the right to comprehensive reproductive health care for millions of Americans.²⁰
- Senator Baldwin's **Reproductive Health Travel Fund Act** would provide women the support they need to access reproductive health services by providing grants to organizations, including abortion funds, to offset the cost of travel-related expenses.²¹
- Senator Baldwin's **Reproductive Health Care Training Act** would ensure that health care professionals can get the training and education they need to meet Americans' dire reproductive health care needs.²²
- Senator Baldwin also cosponsors the **Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act**, which would protect abortion providers in states where abortion remains legal from Republicans' attempts to restrict their practice and create uncertainty about their legal liability.²³
- The **Right to IVF Act**, cosponsored by Senator Baldwin, would protect access to fertility treatments, including in-vitro fertilization.²⁴
- The **Right to Contraception Act**, also cosponsored by Senator Baldwin, would put into law Americans' access to contraception.²⁵

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 - 5 <https://www.guttmacher.org/monthly-abortion-provision-study>
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