



State Facts About Abortion

West Virginia

National Background and Context

Each year, a broad cross section of people in the United States obtain abortions. In 2017, 862,320 abortions were provided in clinical settings in the United States.

The U.S. Supreme Court recognized the constitutional right to abortion in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and has reaffirmed that right in subsequent decisions.

However, since 2010, the U.S. abortion landscape has grown increasingly restrictive as more states adopt laws hostile to abortion rights. Between January 1, 2011 and July 1, 2019, states enacted 483 new abortion restrictions, and these account for nearly 40% of all abortion restrictions enacted by states in the decades since *Roe v. Wade*. Some of the most common state-level abortion restrictions are parental notification or consent requirements for minors, limitations on public funding, mandated counseling designed to dissuade individuals from obtaining an abortion, mandated waiting periods before an abortion, and unnecessary and overly burdensome regulations on abortion facilities.

Abortion Incidence

- Approximately 862,320 abortions occurred in the United States in 2017. The resulting abortion rate of 13.5 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-44) represents an 8% decrease from the 2014 rate of 14.6

- In 2017, 1,430 abortions were provided in West Virginia, though not all abortions that occurred in West Virginia were provided to state residents: Some patients may have traveled from other states, and some West Virginia residents may have traveled to another state for an abortion. There was a 26% decline in the abortion rate in West Virginia between 2014 and 2017, from 6.0 to 4.4 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive

age. Abortions in West Virginia represent 0.2% of all abortions in the United States.

Where Patients Obtain Abortions

- In 2017, there were 1,587 facilities providing abortion in the United States, representing a 5% decrease from the 1,671 facilities in 2014. Sixteen percent of facilities in 2017 were abortion clinics (i.e., clinics where more than half of all patient visits were for abortion), 35% were nonspecialized clinics, 33% were hospitals and 16% were private physicians' offices. Sixty percent of all abortions were provided at abortion clinics, 35% at nonspecialized clinics, 3% at hospitals and 1% at physicians' offices.

- There were 3 facilities providing abortion in West Virginia in 2017, and 1 of those were clinics. These numbers represent a 50% decline in clinics from 2014, when there were five abortion-providing facilities overall, of which two were clinics.

- In 2017, 89% of U.S. counties had no clinics providing abortions. Some 38% of reproductive-age women lived in those counties and would have had to travel elsewhere to obtain an abortion. Of patients who had an abortion in 2014, one-third had to travel more than 25 miles one way to reach a facility.

- In 2017, some 98% of West Virginia counties had no clinics that provided abortions, and 90% of West Virginia women lived in those counties.

Restrictions on Abortion

- A patient must receive state-directed counseling that includes information designed to discourage the patient from having an abortion, and then wait 24 hours before the procedure is provided.

- The use of telemedicine to administer medication abortion is prohibited.

- The parent of a minor must be notified before an abortion is provided.

- Public funding is available for abortion only in cases of life endangerment, rape, incest, or fetal impairment and when the procedure is necessary to prevent long-lasting damage to the patient's physical health.

- An abortion may be performed at 20 or more weeks postfertilization (22 weeks after the last menstrual period) only in cases of life endangerment or severely compromised health.

This law is based on the assertion, which is inconsistent with scientific evidence and has been rejected by the medical community, that a fetus can feel pain at that point in pregnancy.

- The use of a safe, effective and commonly used method of second trimester abortion is prohibited. Abortions using dilation and evacuation are permitted only in cases of life endangerment or severely compromised physical health.

References for information contained in this fact sheet are available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-west-virginia>