

Reproductive Healthcare as a Human Right

In its June 24, 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the U.S. Supreme Court dismantled the constitutional and human right to abortion that had been the law of the land for almost 50 years. The *Dobbs* decision created a seismic decline in the availability of reproductive healthcare services, disproportionately affecting people “who already face discriminatory obstacles to health care, particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, young people, undocumented people, and people who are low-income or living in poverty.” ([Global impacts of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization and abortion regression in the United States](#))

A new [study](#) modeling the effects of the *Dobbs* decision shows that Black women have been “hardest hit by the restricted access [to abortion], with 40% facing one-hour drives after the decision, compared to just 15% before it. Even before the [*Dobbs* decision], nearly 40% of American Indian and Alaska Natives faced hour-long drives; after *Dobbs*, well over half did.” ([Model Shows Where Women Lost Access to Abortion After Dobbs](#))

In its 1948 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) the United Nations declared that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” World leaders in 1994 went a step further to affirm – and in subsequent years to reaffirm – that sexual and reproductive health, including the right to plan one’s family, are fundamental human rights essential to the well-being of individuals, families and nations. (U.N. [International Conference on Population and Development](#)) The international community has made it clear that “abortion is a fundamental human right, which is also critical to ensuring health, justice, and equality...and that “regression on abortion rights in the United States [is] a clear violation of human rights.” ([Global impacts of Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization and abortion regression in the United States](#))

The data are clear: restricting abortion does not reduce abortion rates, and ensuring access to healthcare services - including contraception, family planning and legal abortion - can prevent unsafe abortions and save lives. ([The World Health Organization](#)) The multinational [Guttmacher-Lancet Commission](#) evaluated decades of research on sexual and reproductive health and concluded the following:

“Sexual and reproductive health and rights are essential for sustainable development because of their links to gender equality and women’s wellbeing, their impact on maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health, and their roles in shaping future economic development and environmental sustainability.... Everyone has a right to make decisions that govern their bodies, free of stigma, discrimination, and coercion.”

Consistent with decades of research and the findings and recommendations of the United Nations, World Health Organization and other international bodies, the Wayland Human Rights, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee acknowledges reproductive healthcare as a human right and stands for protecting access to the full range of reproductive health services for all Americans.