

Reactions to Senate Bill 8 among Texans who Obtained Out-of-State Abortion Care

Whitney Arey, Laura Dixon, Elsa Vizcarra, Kari White

On September 1, 2021, Texas Senate Bill 8 (SB 8)—the most restrictive state-level abortion law in the United States at the time—went into effect. The law bans abortion upon detection of embryonic cardiac activity, which can take place as early as 5 to 6 weeks after a person's last menstrual period. The law also permits almost anyone to sue abortion providers and others who help someone obtain an abortion in Texas after this stage of pregnancy.¹

After SB 8 went into effect, thousands of Texans who were no longer eligible for in-state services traveled to obtain abortion care at facilities in border states and states even further away.^{2,3} Restricted access to services in Texas, challenges getting timely appointments, and long-distance travel to out-of-state facilities have created hardships for many Texans seeking abortion care.

We conducted 65 interviews with people who sought abortion care in Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Oklahoma between October 2021 and February 2022, after SB 8 was implemented. In this brief, we visually represent participants' emotional responses to not being able to get abortion care in Texas and their reactions to SB 8.

How participants felt about not being able to get an abortion in Texas



Access to abortion is essential to reproductive autonomy. Participants' statements about how they felt about SB 8 reflect how the law compromised their ability to carry out their abortion decision in a timely, supported manner and their experiences of hardship getting care elsewhere.

How Texans who obtained out-of-state abortions viewed SB 8



The participants we interviewed overwhelmingly expressed negative opinions about SB 8. This reflects the position of the majority of women in Texas, who oppose banning abortion after 6 weeks of pregnancy, and the majority of Texans, who oppose banning abortion outright if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.^{4,5}



Conclusions

Our interviews revealed that pregnant Texans who sought out-of-state abortion care after SB 8 went into effect expressed almost exclusively negative thoughts and feelings about the law. Restrictions on abortion compromised the right to reproductive autonomy. Not being able to access timely care close to home creates unnecessary hardships in multiple arenas of people's lives.

Further restrictions on abortion in Texas and other U.S. states will interfere with pregnant people's health and well-being. Our research indicates that even those who do obtain abortion care in the face of increased restrictions experience emotional impacts along with financial and logistical burdens.

Methods

We recruited participants from abortion facilities in Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Oklahoma using flyers. Participants self-referred to the study and, after we determined they were eligible, they completed the interview by phone.

To create the word clouds, we used interview transcript segments that included any comments participants made about their reactions to SB 8. We identified the 1000 most common words in these responses and highlighted both description and emotion words. We then organized these reactions into two categories: what people thought about the law and descriptions of how the law made people feel. Direct synonyms (e.g., harder/more difficult) were categorized together for clarity in the creation of the word clouds. NVivo was used for all qualitative analyses. The Institutional Review Board at The University of Texas at Austin approved the study protocol.

References

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