

Separating Near and Far

Causal Effect of Abortion Access on Parental Conflict

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Abortion in the US

Access to abortion has been the focus of contentious public discourse in US

- ▶ 2010-2017: Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP)
- ▶ 2022-today: Roe v. Wade overruling



Figure: US Counties with an Abortion Clinic

Abortion in the US

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Figure: US Counties with an Abortion Clinic

Reduced abortion access affects societal outcomes through two conceptual channels:

- ▶ Impact on **marginal abortion seeker**:
 - ▶ Increase in fertility (Lindo et al., 2020; Venator and Fletcher, 2021; Myers et al., 2025)
 - ▶ Long-term negative effects on women's economic and health outcomes (Myers, 2017; Miller et al., 2020; Jones and Pineda-Torres, 2024)
 - ▶ Adverse domestic situations, such as increased exposure to violent partners (Muratori, 2025; Dave et al., 2025; Garcia-Ramos and Pineda-Torres, 2025)
- ▶ Impact on **non-abortion seeker**:
 - ▶ Relevant to quantify societal impact of access; little evidence
 - ▶ Raising cost of sexual activity affects sexual behavior (Klick and Stratmann, 2003)

Does **abortion access** affect **separation** and **conflict among parents**?

- ▶ **Setting:** Wisconsin, 2011–2017; TRAP law induced abortion clinic closures generate exogenous variation in abortion access
- ▶ **Data:** Administrative family and criminal court records from Wisconsin
- ▶ **Empirical challenge:** Clinics are non-randomly located
- ▶ **Findings:** Evidence for selection away from risky partners

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Venator and Fletcher (2021) document an increase in fertility
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Does **abortion access** affect **separation** and **conflict among parents**?

- ▶ **Setting:** Wisconsin, 2011–2017; TRAP law induced abortion clinic closures generate exogenous variation in abortion access
- ▶ **Data:** Administrative family and criminal court records from Wisconsin
Universe of Wisconsin court proceedings with detailed information on inv. parties
Provides detailed information on underlying conditions of the relationship
- ▶ **Empirical challenge:** Clinics are non-randomly located
- ▶ **Findings:** Evidence for selection away from risky partners

Does **abortion access** affect **separation** and **conflict among parents**?

- ▶ **Setting:** Wisconsin, 2011–2017; TRAP law induced abortion clinic closures generate exogenous variation in abortion access
- ▶ **Data:** Administrative family and criminal court records from Wisconsin
- ▶ **Empirical challenge:** Clinics are non-randomly located
Standard CDiD estimator prone to endogeneity bias
Provide easy-to-implement solution by demeaning the treatment variable
- ▶ **Findings:** Evidence for selection away from risky partners

Does **abortion access** affect **separation** and **conflict among parents**?

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- ▶ **Findings:** Evidence for selection away from risky partners
Reduced abortion access is consistent with declining rates of single parenthood
Effects driven by unstable couples who would have been exposed to violent conflict

Outline

Institutional Details

Data

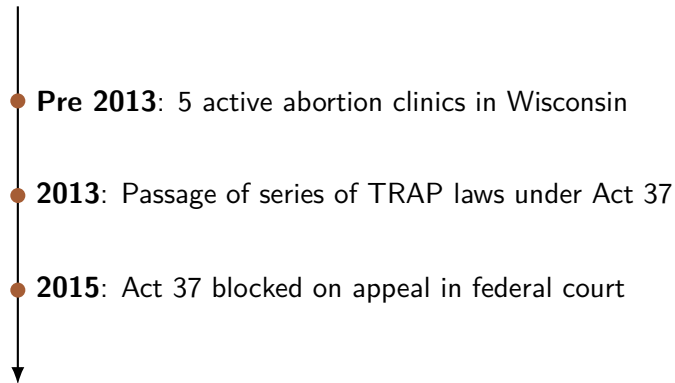
Empirical Strategy

Results

Conclusion

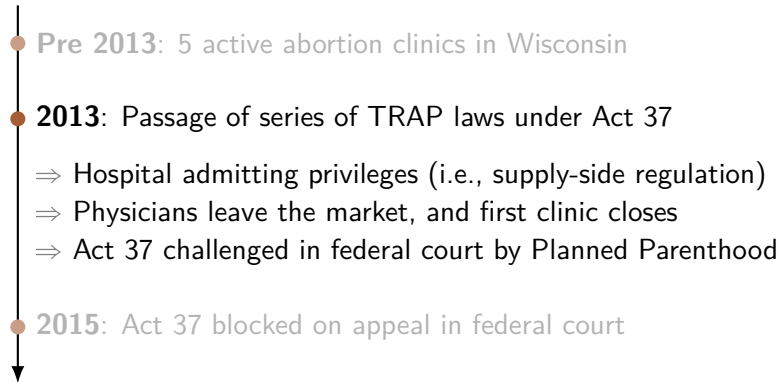
Institutional Details

Abortion Regulation in Wisconsin



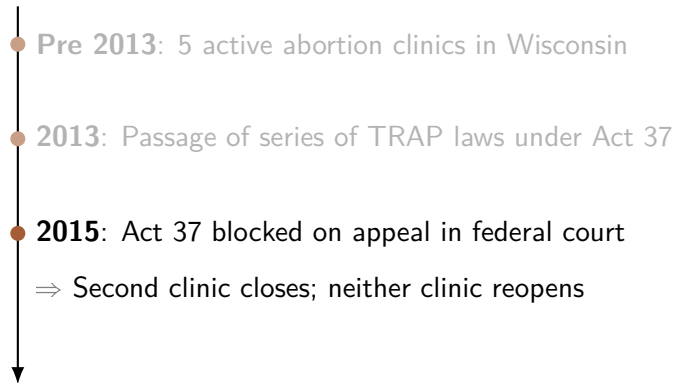
Institutional Details

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Institutional Details

Abortion Regulation in Wisconsin



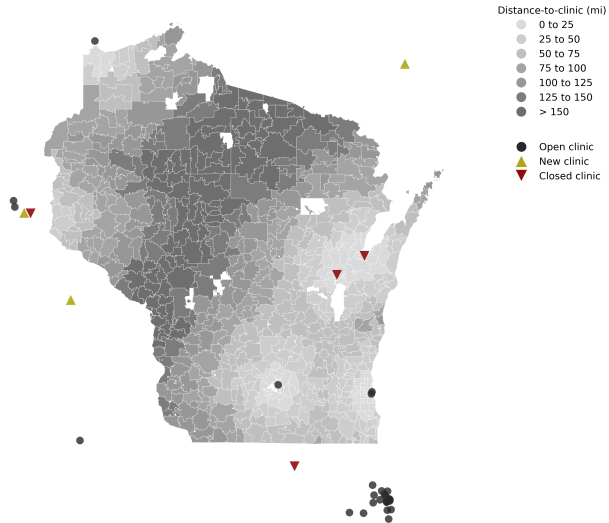


Figure: Abortion clinics and baseline access

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Abortion Access

- ▶ Distance to the nearest abortion clinic as a proxy for abortion access
- ▶ Location of operational abortion clinics in Wisconsin and bordering regions
- ▶ **Treatment variable:**
Change in distance-to-clinic (2013–2015)

▶ Figure distance-to-clinic

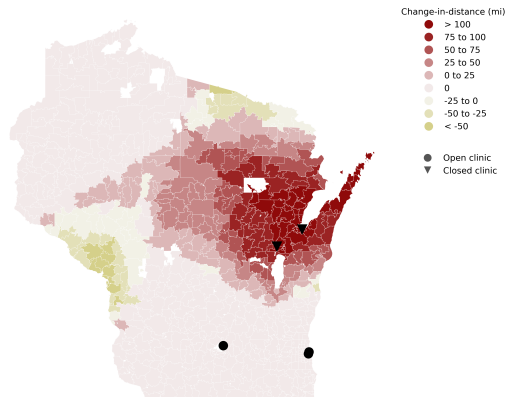


Figure: Change in distance-to-clinic

Data

Wisconsin Criminal and Family Court Records (WCCA)

- ▶ Administrative online court record system of the Wisconsin judiciary
- ▶ Compile universe of family legal disputes and criminal convictions (from 2011 to 2017)
 - ▶ **Family disputes:**
paternity, child support, and divorce proceedings
 - ▶ **Criminal convictions:**
domestic violence (DV) related measures
- ▶ Residential address, case category, name, date of birth, race of involved parties
- ▶ Sample restricted to cases with individuals of reproductive age (15–44)
- ▶ Aggregate court proceedings to the zip code $\times$ month level

▶ Example Page

▶ Summary Statistics

▶ Offender characteristics

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- ▶ Main challenge: **endogeneity of levels** (baseline level of abortion access is correlated with local demand)
- ▶ Solution: DID design that focuses on effect of changes in access rather than absolute access
- ▶ Remaining challenge: **endogeneity of changes** (change in access is mechanically correlated with baseline access)
 - ▶ Large shocks fall disproportionately on neighborhoods already close to clinics
 - ▶ DID design is still biased

▶ further explanation

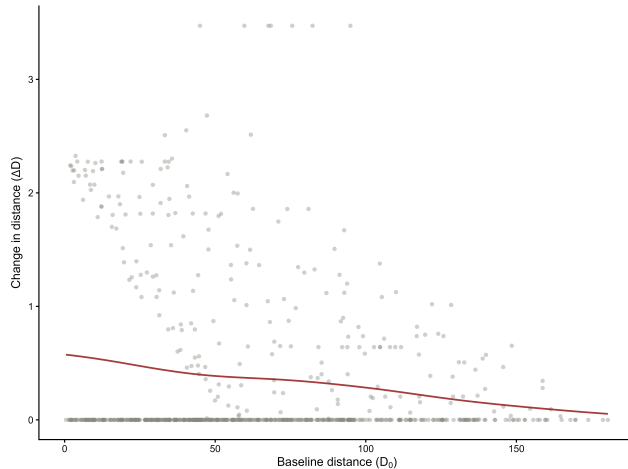


Figure: Correlation of change in distance and baseline distance

- Formally shown in paper: **recenter change in access** around its conditional mean

Regression equation

$$y_{it} = \beta(\tilde{\Delta}D_i \times Post_t) + \gamma_i + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

- ▶ y_{it} is the outcome (per 100,000 population aged 15–44) for zip code i in time period t
- ▶ $\tilde{\Delta}D_i$ denotes the demeaned change in distance-to-clinic ($\Delta D - E[\Delta D|D_0]$)
- ▶ $Post_t$ is an indicator for the post 2013 Act 37 time periods
- ▶ γ_i and θ_t are zip code and month fixed effects

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Main results

Effect on family court proceedings

Does **abortion access** affect **family court proceedings**?

Child support

- ▶ Contested paternity: through court judgment (~6,800 cases per year)
- ▶ Voluntary paternity: without court involvement (~5,200 cases per year)
- ▶ Established paternity: legal fatherhood already established (~4,600 cases per year)

Divorce

- ▶ With children: spouse assumed legal parent at birth (~6,400 cases per year)
- ▶ Without children (~4,500 cases per year)

Main results

Effect on family court proceedings

	Child support			Divorce	
	Contested paternity (1)	Voluntary paternity (2)	Established paternity (3)	W/ minor children (4)	W/o minor children (5)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-4.557*** (1.163)	-1.221** (0.491)	0.648 (0.478)	0.063 (0.373)	-0.138 (0.353)
Pre-treatment Mean	24.711	18.643	19.636	25.784	19.491
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

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- ▶ Abortion clinic closures are consistent with a reduction in **single parenthood**
- ▶ In particular for cases where paternity is established in court [▶ event studies](#)

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- ▶ No response in separation for **unmarried couples** (paternity established)

Main results

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- ▶ No effect on divorce among **spouses** with and without minor children

Mechanism

Effect on family court proceedings with DV protection

Do the **patterns** observed in the family court proceedings extend to **violence** within intimate relationships?

- ▶ Dom. violence protection: address sealed when disclosure poses safety threat

Mechanism

Effect on family court proceedings with DV protection

	Child support			Divorce	
	Contested paternity (1)	Voluntary paternity (2)	Established paternity (3)	W/ minor children (4)	W/o minor children (5)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	0.035 (0.039)	-0.176*** (0.036)	-0.010 (0.027)	-0.034 (0.022)	-0.005 (0.018)
Pre-treatment Mean	0.366	0.133	0.153	0.154	0.065
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

Mechanism

Effect on family court proceedings with DV protection

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- ▶ **Reduction** in voluntary paternity cases under **domestic violence protection**
- ▶ No effect on domestic violence related separations

Is there a corresponding increase in **domestic violence**?

Domestic violence convictions

- ▶ applied as a modifier to underlying offenses (~6,300 cases per year), including battery (31%), disorderly conduct (66%), and other offenses (3%)

Domestic restraining orders

- ▶ Issued: court orders prohibiting contact with protected person (~2,000 filings per year)
- ▶ Violation: restrained party violates conditions of an active order (~300 viol. per year)

Mechanism

Effect on domestic violence

	DV			DRO	
	All (1)	Battery (2)	Disorderly (3)	Issued (4)	Violations (5)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.451 (0.624)	-0.321 (0.254)	-0.357 (0.459)	0.154 (0.230)	0.163** (0.069)
Pre-treatment Mean	24.067	6.992	15.902	7.622	1.133
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

Mechanism

Effect on domestic violence

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- ▶ Stock of active restraining orders does not change but existing orders are more often violated; **Increase in violations** is driven by men [▶ table](#)
- ▶ No response in other domestic violence measures

Additional Results

▶ Event Studies

- ▶ Family court proceedings
- ▶ Dom. violence protection
- ▶ Dom. violence

▶ Population Stability

- ▶ Population
- ▶ Population age 15 to 44
- ▶ Population female

▶ Effect by baseline distance

- ▶ Local linear estimator
- ▶ Family court proceedings
- ▶ Dom. violence protection
- ▶ Dom. violence

▶ Heterogeneity: divorce by petitioner

- ▶ divorce by petitioner

▶ Heterogeneity: domestic violence by gender of offender

- ▶ DV by gender

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Summary: Reduced abortion access induces **selective partner choice**

- ▶ Evidence for the non-abortion seeker channel — a behavioral adjustment in intimate relationship formation:
 - ▶ Decline in child support proceedings (contested & voluntary paternity), consistent with reduced single parenthood
 - ▶ Decline in dom. violent protected cases, consistent with fewer intimate relationships formed with violent partners
- ▶ Little evidence for an increase in dom. violence convictions (Dave et al., 2025; Muratori, 2025)
- ▶ Next steps: Explore effects on dom. restraining order violation in more detail

Thank you!

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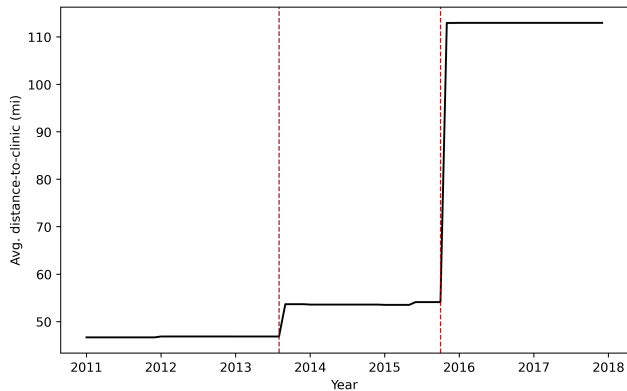


Figure: Average distance-to-clinic from 2011 to 2017 (affected zip codes)

Kenosha County Case Number [REDACTED] In Re the Paternity of [REDACTED]

Case summary

Filing date [REDACTED]	Case type [REDACTED]	Case status Closed
Class code description Paternity - Post Adjudication	Responsible official Wilk, David	Branch ID 5

Case(s) cross-referenced with this case
[REDACTED]

Party summary

Party type	Party name	Party status
Mother	[REDACTED]	
Adjudicated father	[REDACTED]	

Parties

Mother: [REDACTED]

Date of birth [REDACTED]	Sex Female	Race ⓘ African American
Address (last updated 02-17-2020) [REDACTED]		

Adjudicated father: [REDACTED]

Date of birth [REDACTED]	Sex Male	Race ⓘ African American
Address (last updated 12-22-2015) [REDACTED]		

	Untreated Zip			Treated Zip		
	Mean _{pre} (1)	SD _{pre} (2)	Δ Mean (3)	Mean _{pre} (4)	SD _{pre} (5)	Δ Mean (6)
Abortion Access						
Distance to clinic (miles)	62.15	41.43	-4.05	66.12	41.46	58.03
Population and Demographics						
Population	8,426	10,554	95.86	6,977	9,723	56.82
Population % Female	0.4924	0.0294	0.0012	0.4925	0.0236	-0.0021
Population % Age 15-44	0.3594	0.0816	-0.0104	0.3425	0.0656	-0.0119
Wisconsin Circuit Court Records						
Child Support (court mandated paternity)	222.41	269.16	-2.70	259.32	214.51	12.23
Child Support (voluntary paternity)	195.46	197.28	32.09	203.11	207.40	34.54
Child Support (no paternity)	264.99	302.54	-30.70	260.86	239.47	-30.04
Divorce (with minor children)	317.37	173.58	-6.94	310.13	184.45	6.21
Divorce (without minor children)	258.94	180.43	-67.71	238.27	178.88	-19.83
Dom. violence (all crimes)	234.61	229.08	21.85	248.40	221.99	44.30
Dom. violence (battery)	69.47	97.16	13.08	69.50	95.65	20.79
Dom. violence (disorderly conduct)	157.18	166.22	10.43	174.08	161.37	28.80
Dom. restraining order	70.55	104.18	-1.11	47.40	73.34	-4.36
Dom. restraining order (violation)	11.43	27.00	-1.16	9.59	28.59	0.6343

Notes: 230 treated zip codes and 482 untreated zip codes. Court proceedings per 100,000 population aged 15–44, annual averages.

Table: Summary statistics of Wisconsin zip code characteristics

	Dom. violence			Dom. restraining order	
	All (1)	Battery (2)	Dis. conduct (3)	Issued (4)	Violated (5)
Wisconsin resident	0.97	0.97	0.98	0.97	0.94
Male	0.86	0.90	0.84	0.86	0.92
Mean Age	33.29	32.76	33.32	31.01	36.45
White	0.62	0.56	0.65	0.31	0.55
Black	0.27	0.32	0.24	0.39	0.36
Hispanic	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.11	0.04
Other race	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.04	0.04
% Share all cases	0.43	0.13	0.28	0.14	0.02
N	55,373	16,619	36,404	17,826	2,757

Table: Summary statistics of Wisconsin zip code characteristics

Empirical strategy

Biased CDiD

Endogeneity of changes

- ▶ CDiD compares zip codes with small shocks to zip codes with large shocks
- ▶ Thus, shocks ΔD must be exogenously distributed across baseline distance D_0
- ▶ But large shocks systematically fall on regions that were initially close to clinics
- ▶ CDiD effectively compares zip codes with small D_0 to zip codes with large D_0
- ▶ When sensitivity of household differs across D_0 , then CDiD biased

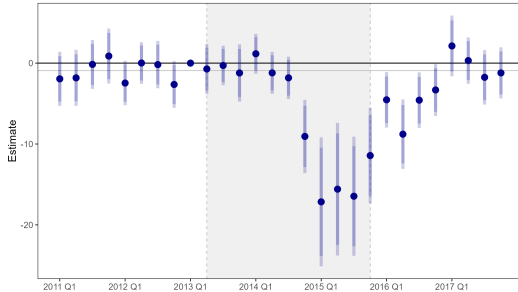
Solution

- ▶ Recentering removes mechanical correlation between ΔD and D_0

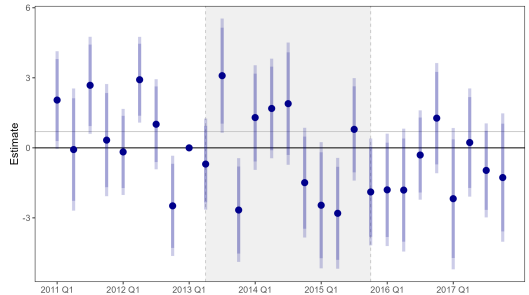
$$\tilde{\Delta D} = \Delta D - E[\Delta D | D_0]$$

Additional results

Event study - Family court proceedings



(a) Contested paternity



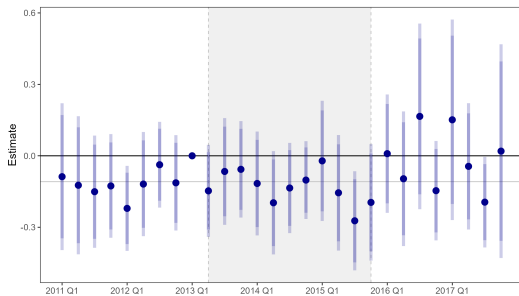
(b) Voluntary paternity

[◀ Back main results](#)

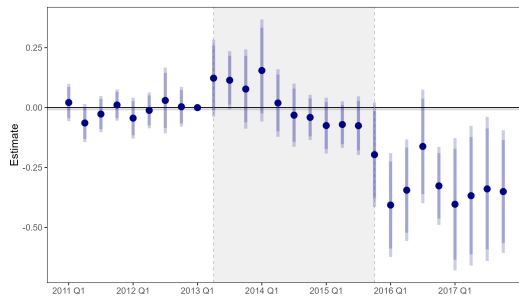
[◀ Back add. results](#)

Empirical strategy

Event study - Dom. violence protection



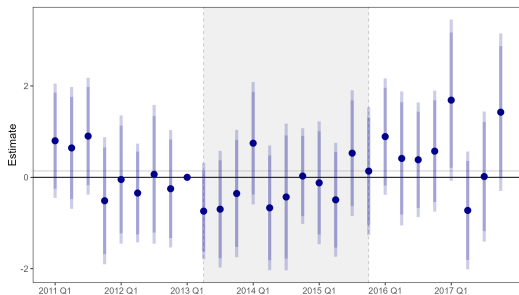
(a) Contested paternity - DV protected



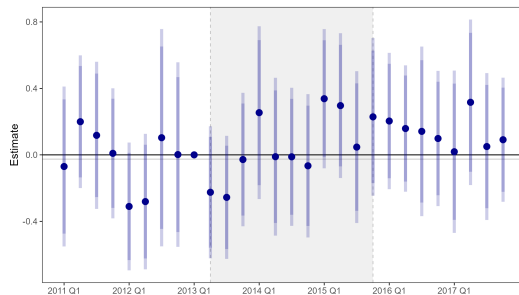
(b) Voluntary paternity - DV protected

Empirical strategy

Event study - Dom. violence



(a) Dom. restraining order issued



(b) Dom. restraining order violations

Empirical strategy

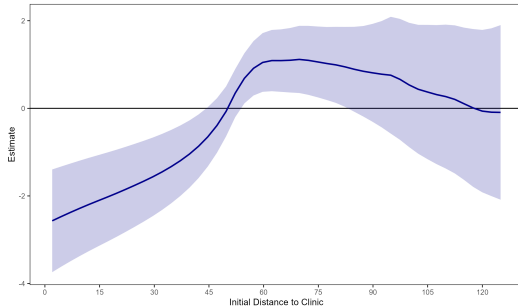
Effects by baseline distance

$$\left(\hat{\beta}(D_0), \hat{\gamma}_i, \hat{\theta}_t\right)' = \arg \min_{\beta_k, \gamma_i, \theta_t} \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \mathcal{K}\left(\frac{D_0 - d}{h}\right) (Y_{it} - \beta \widetilde{\Delta D}_i \times Post_t - \gamma_i - \theta_t)^2 \quad (2)$$

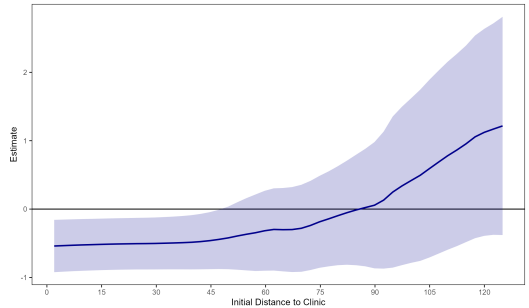
where the zipcode and month fixed effects, γ and θ , are estimated globally and the effects of the change in distance is estimated locally. $\mathcal{K}$ is an Epanechnikov kernel with bandwidth h . In the results that follow, we choose the bandwidth to be 50 miles.

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Family court proceedings



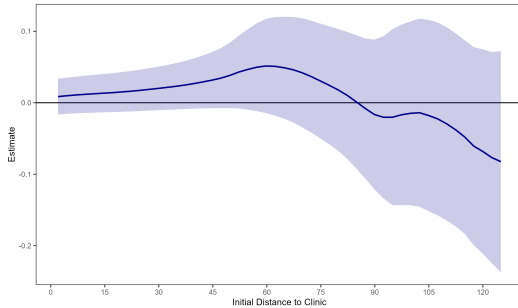
(a) Contested paternity



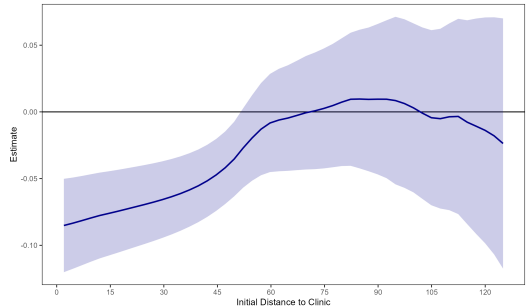
(b) Voluntary paternity

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Dom. violence protection



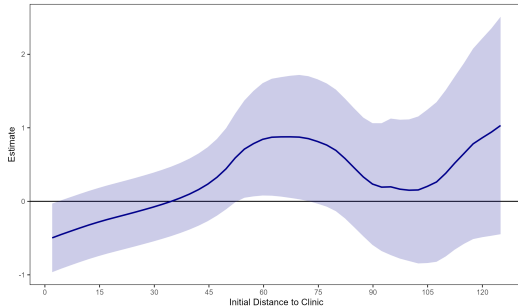
(a) Contested paternity - DV protected



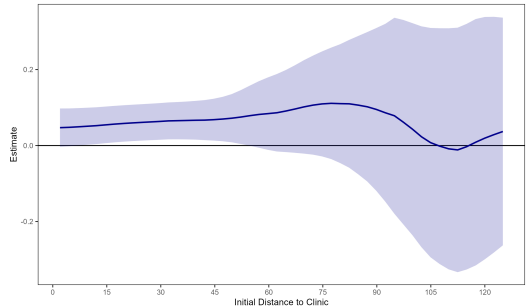
(b) Voluntary paternity - DV protection

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Dom. violence



(a) Dom. violence



(b) Dom. restraining order violations

Additional results

Population stability

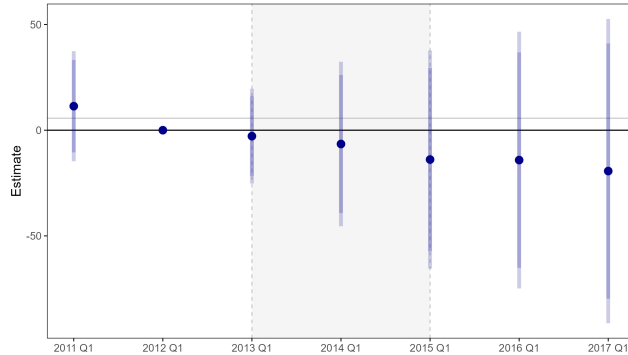


Figure: Total population

Additional results

Population stability

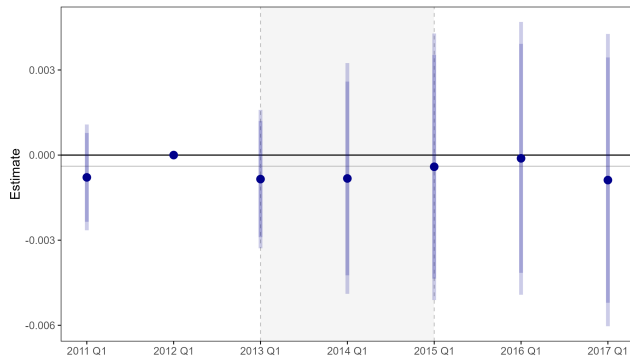


Figure: Population % age 15–44

Additional results

Population stability

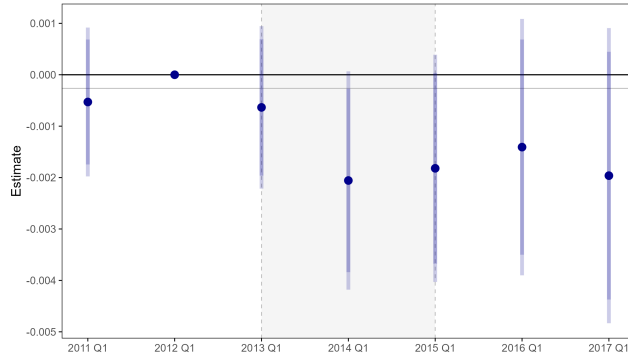


Figure: Population % female

Additional results

Effect on divorce by petitioner

	Divorce (1)	By petitioner		
		Joint (2)	Female (3)	Male (4)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.075 (0.498)	-0.261 (0.309)	0.118 (0.294)	0.058 (0.189)
Pre-treatment Mean	45.275	16.597	20.294	8.342
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

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Additional results

Effect on domestic violence by gender

	DV			DRO	
	All (1)	Battery (2)	Disorderly (3)	Issued (4)	Violations (5)
Panel A: Male offender					
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.443 (0.506)	-0.260 (0.240)	-0.399 (0.359)	0.169 (0.207)	0.136** (0.069)
Pre-treatment Mean	20.427	6.241	13.135	6.528	1.041
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808
Panel B: Female offender					
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.028 (0.233)	-0.072 (0.070)	0.032 (0.191)	-0.039 (0.079)	0.030 (0.022)
Pre-treatment Mean	3.545	0.724	2.698	1.065	0.087
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

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