

Separating Near and Far

Causal Effect of Abortion Access on Parental Conflict

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PhD-Workshop on the Economics of Criminal Behavior
September 2026

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

A large literature studies how fertility control shapes **household dynamics**. Reduced abortion access affects the conditions and formation of households through two channels:

Channel 1: **marginal abortion seeker**

carries unintended pregnancy to term

- ▶ **Increase in fertility** (Lindo et al., 2020; Venator and Fletcher, 2021; Myers et al., 2025)
- ▶ **Experience adverse domestic situations** (Muratori, 2025; Dave et al., 2025; Garcia-Ramos and Pineda-Torres, 2025)

Channel 2: **non abortion seeker**

faces higher expected cost of unintended pregnancy

- ▶ **Change in sexual activity** (Klick and Stratmann, 2003; Flynn et al., 2026)
- ▶ **Potentially inducing more cautious behavior ex ante; little evidence**

Does **abortion access** affect the incidence of **household separation** and **conflict**?

- ▶ **Setting:** Wisconsin, 2011–2017; TRAP law induced abortion clinic closures generate exogenous variation in abortion access
- ▶ **Data:** Administrative court records on paternity, child support and divorce
- ▶ **Empirical strategy:** Continuous Difference-in-Difference (CDiD)
- ▶ **Findings:** Reductions in the incidence of single parenthood

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- ▶ **Data:** Administrative court records on paternity, child support and divorce
Universe of family court proceedings with detailed information on parties
Supplemented with criminal records and domestic restraining orders
- ▶ **Empirical strategy:** Continuous Difference-in-Difference (CDiD)
- ▶ **Findings:** Reductions in the incidence of single parenthood

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- ▶ **Empirical strategy:** Continuous Difference-in-Difference (CDiD)
Measure abortion access using distance-to-clinic (Lindo et al., 2020)
Advance on identification within distance-based “closure” designs
- ▶ **Findings:** Reductions in the incidence of single parenthood

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- ▶ **Findings:** Reductions in the incidence of single parenthood
Heterogeneous effects in single parenthood along the access gradient
Evidence for selection away from adverse and violent relationships

Outline

Institutional Details

Data

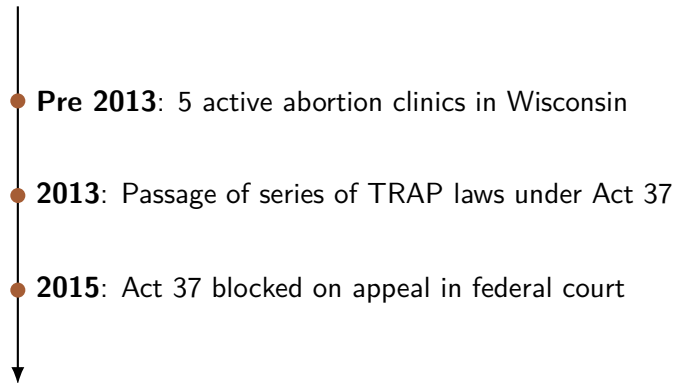
Empirical Strategy

Results

Conclusion and Next Steps

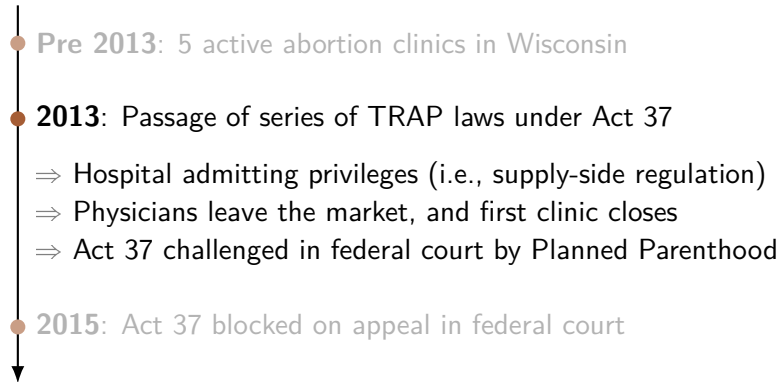
Institutional Details

Abortion Regulation in Wisconsin



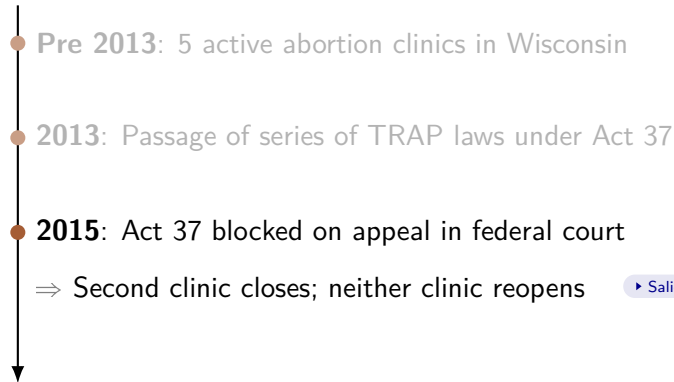
Institutional Details

Abortion Regulation in Wisconsin



Institutional Details

Abortion Regulation in Wisconsin



► Salience?

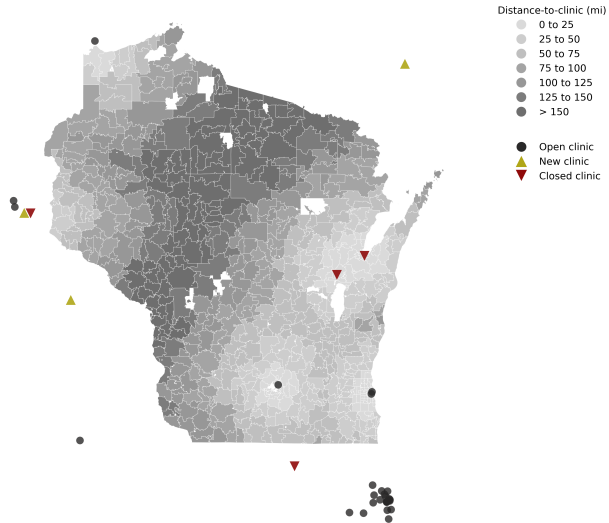


Figure: Abortion clinics and baseline access

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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

▶ Empirical strategy

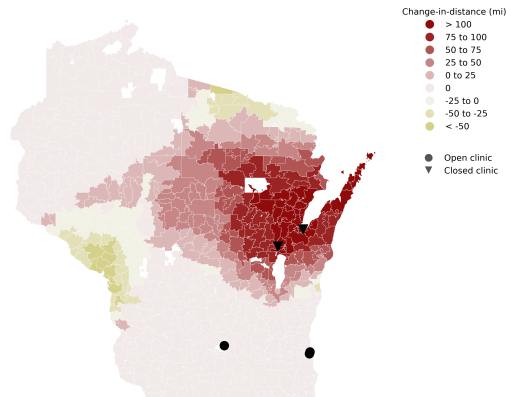


Figure: Change in distance-to-clinic

Data

Wisconsin Court Records (WCCA)

- ▶ Administrative online court record system of the Wisconsin judiciary
- ▶ Compile universe of legal disputes and criminal convictions (from 2011 to 2017)
 - ▶ **Family court records:** paternity, child support, and divorce records
 - ▶ Supplementary: criminal records and domestic restraining orders
- ▶ 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 records to the zip code $\times$ month level

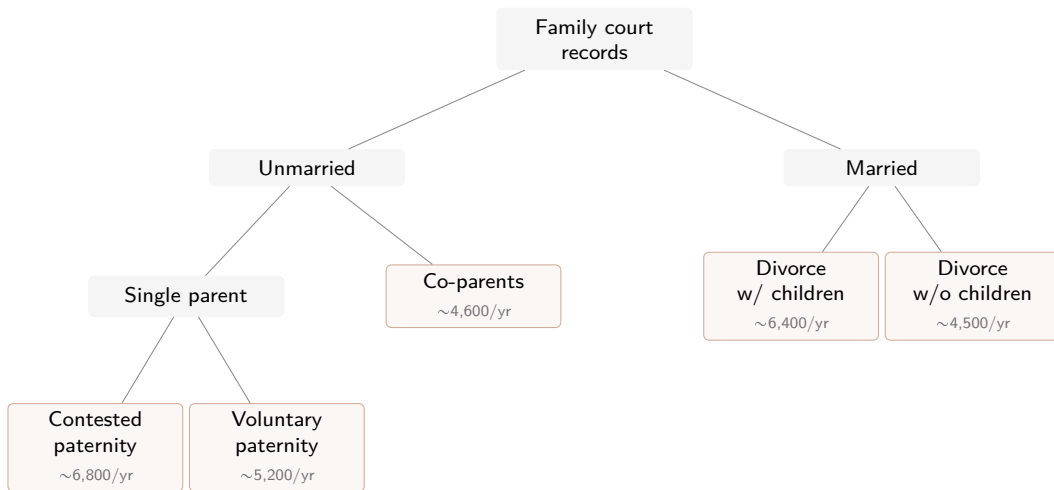
▶ Example page

▶ Summary statistics

▶ Offender characteristics

Data

Family court records



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Continuous difference-in-difference

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

- ▶ y_{it} is the outcome (per 100,000 population aged 15–44) for zip code i in time period t
- ▶ ΔD_i denotes the change in distance-to-clinic
- ▶ $Post_t$ 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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However, change in distance-to-clinic is **mechanically correlated** with baseline access

- ▶ Large shocks fall disproportionately on neighborhoods already close to clinics

▶ Correlation figure

▶ Figure change in distance-to-clinic

▶ Further explanation

Continuous difference-in-difference

$$y_{it} = \beta(\tilde{\Delta D}_i \times Post_t) + \gamma_i + \theta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

- ▶ 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

However, change in distance-to-clinic is **mechanically correlated** with baseline access

- ▶ Large shocks fall disproportionately on neighborhoods already close to clinics

▶ Correlation figure

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▶ Further explanation

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Main results

Effect on family court proceedings

	Child support			Divorce	
	Single parents (contested) (1)	Single parents (voluntary) (2)	Co-parents (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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- ▶ A 50 mile increase in the distance-to-clinic leads to 4.6 fewer contested paternity cases per 100,000 population aged 15-44, an 18% decline
- ▶ Abortion clinic closures lead to a reduction in **single parenthood**

Main results

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- ▶ No response in separation for **unmarried couples** (co-parents)

Main results

Effect on family court proceedings

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Pre-treatment Mean	24.711	18.643	19.636	25.784	19.491
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- ▶ No effect on divorce among **spouses** with and without minor children

Main results

Effects on single parenthood over time

- ▶ No systematic pre-trend
- ▶ **Temporary decline** – response emerges around 1.5 years after closure and fades by 2017

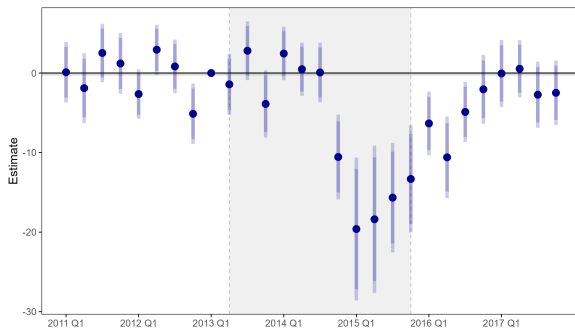


Figure: Event study on single parenthood

Main results

Effects on single parenthood by baseline distance

- ▶ Response depends on baseline distance-to-clinic
- ▶ **Declines** concentrated in **high access** areas
- ▶ No significant response in intermediate access areas (~50+ miles)

▶ Local linear estimator

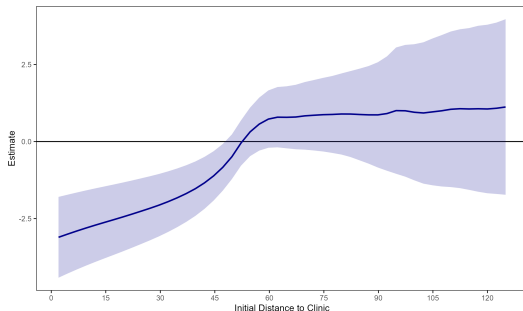


Figure: Local estimator on single parenthood

Along which **dimensions** of a relationship do people **select**?

- ▶ Effect on single parenthood by dating distance
 - ▶ Table dating distance
- ▶ Effect on single parenthood with criminal background
 - ▶ Table criminal background
- ▶ Effect on family court records with domestic violence protection
 - ▶ Table domestic violence protection
- ▶ Effect on domestic restraining order
 - ▶ Table domestic restraining order

Additional Results

▶ Event Studies

- ▶ Single parenthood
- ▶ Any criminal background
- ▶ Domestic violence background
- ▶ Domestic violence protection

▶ Population Stability

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

▶ Effect by baseline distance

- ▶ Local linear estimator
- ▶ Single parenthood
- ▶ Domestic violence protection

▶ Heterogeneity: divorce by petitioner

- ▶ divorce by petitioner

▶ Heterogeneity: domestic violence by gender of offender

- ▶ Domestic violence by gender

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Summary: Reduced abortion access lowers incidence of **single parenthood**; response concentrated in previously high access areas (≤ 50 miles baseline distance)

- ▶ Evidence for behavioral response — **selection away** from **adverse relationships**
 - ▶ Decline concentrated among proximate and long-distance relationships
 - ▶ Reduction in single parents where the father has a criminal background, especially for domestic violence; and cases under domestic violence protection
 - ▶ Shift toward shorter domestic restraining orders, consistent with earlier exit from abusive relationships
- ▶ Next steps: Proxy sexual behavior with condom usage from retail data

Thank you!

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Causal Effect of Abortion Access on Parental Conflict

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Institutional Details

Were the closures salient?

- ▶ Act 37 received **public attention**
- ▶ Searches for Wisconsin-specific abortion terms peak around the time of the law passage
- ▶ Clinic closures were widely covered by **state and local media**
- ▶ Anti-abortion protesters regularly present outside clinics

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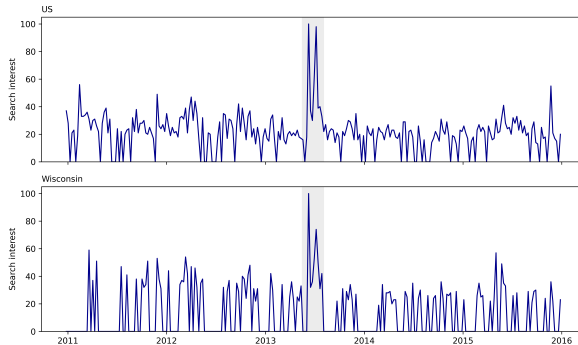


Figure: Google trends for WI-specific abortion terms

Notes: Search terms are “abortion wisconsin”, “abortion wi”, “abortion legal wisconsin”, and “abortion law wisconsin”.

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HEALTH

Green Bay clinic sold, won't provide abortions

JULY 25, 2013 — 9:50AM

Green Bay woman's clinic will no longer offer abortions after sale to Bellin Health

Wednesday, July 24, 2013 5:41 p.m. CDT by Terry Lee

POLITICS

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin to close its Appleton abortion clinic

JESSIE OPOIEN | The Capital Times | jopoien@madison.com | @jessieopie
Aug 22, 2016

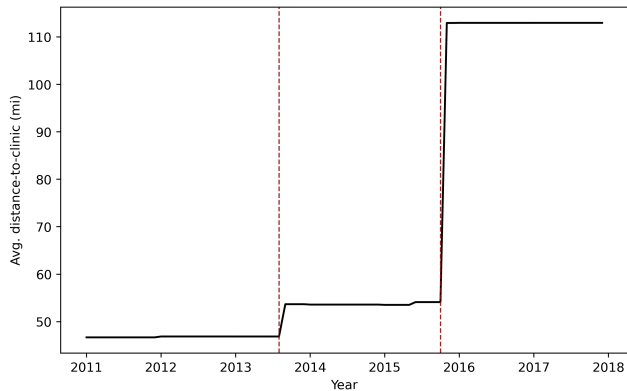


Figure: Average distance-to-clinic from 2011 to 2017 (affected zip codes)

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 (single parents; contested)	222.41	269.16	-2.70	259.32	214.51	12.23
Child Support (single parents; voluntary)	195.46	197.28	32.09	203.11	207.40	34.54
Child Support (co-parents)	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
Domestic violence (all crimes)	234.61	229.08	21.85	248.40	221.99	44.30
Domestic violence (battery)	69.47	97.16	13.08	69.50	95.65	20.79
Domestic violence (disorderly conduct)	157.18	166.22	10.43	174.08	161.37	28.80
Domestic restraining order	70.55	104.18	-1.11	47.40	73.34	-4.36
Domestic 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

	Domestic violence			Domestic 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

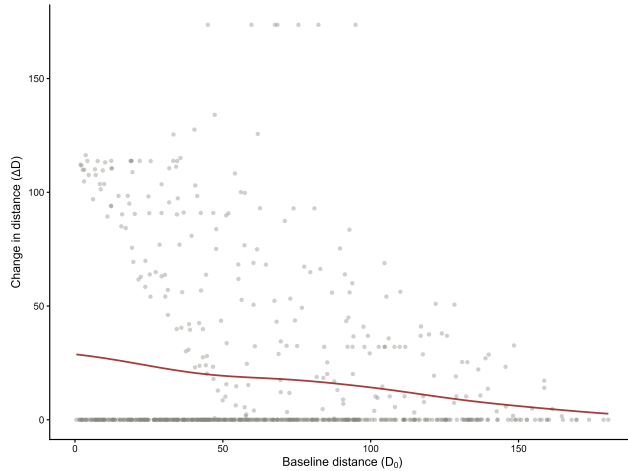


Figure: Correlation of change in distance and baseline distance

- **Recenter change in access** around its conditional mean (red line)

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

Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood by dating distance

Dating distance: geographic distance between parents' residences

- ▶ Proxies geographic scope of relationship formation
- ▶ Sample: single parents (as they were unlikely to be previously living together)

Effect on single parenthood by dating distance

[illegible]

Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood by dating distance

	Distance between single parents							
	All (1)	0-10 miles (2)	10-20 miles (3)	20-30 miles (4)	30-40 miles (5)	40-50 miles (6)	50-60 miles (7)	≥60 miles (8)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-5.778*** (1.322)	-2.891*** (0.892)	-0.182 (0.156)	-0.140 (0.110)	-0.070 (0.072)	0.030 (0.059)	-0.168*** (0.047)	-0.362*** (0.102)
Pre-treatment Mean	43.354	19.833	3.617	1.559	0.764	0.458	0.342	1.717
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

- Decline in single parenthood **concentrated at both tails** of the dating distance (i.e., close-by and long distance)

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Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood with criminal background

Criminal background: men's previous criminal conviction

- ▶ Proxies partner risk prior to relationship formation; measured for any conviction and for domestic violence convictions separately
- ▶ Conviction window is 4 years prior to the court proceeding, excluding the 9 months preceding the filing
- ▶ Sample: single parents where the father has a prior conviction

Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood with criminal background

	Any crime		Domestic violence	
	Single parents (contested) (1)	Single parents (voluntary) (2)	Single parents (contested) (3)	Single parents (voluntary) (4)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-1.361*** (0.336)	0.082 (0.137)	-0.545*** (0.128)	-0.156*** (0.057)
Pre-treatment Mean	6.209	3.737	1.441	0.779
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood with criminal background

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- Decline in single parenthood where the father has a prior conviction (-22%), concentrated among domestic violence convictions (-38%)

Mechanism

Effect on single parenthood with criminal background

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- ▶ No response for any criminal conviction; single parenthood where the men has domestic violence convictions falls by 20%

Mechanism

Effect on family court records with domestic violence protection

Domestic violence (DV) protection: address in court sealed when disclosure poses safety threat

- ▶ Proxies exposure to violent partner
- ▶ Sample: family court cases (i.e., child support and divorce) where one address is sealed

Mechanism

Effect on family court records with domestic violence protection

	Child support			Divorce	
	Single parents (contested) (1)	Single parents (voluntary) (2)	Co-parents (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

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- ▶ **Reduction** in single parenthood (voluntary) under **domestic violence protection**
- ▶ No effect on domestic violence related separations

Mechanism

Effect on domestic restraining orders

Domestic restraining orders (DRO): court orders prohibiting contact with a protected person

- ▶ Duration of DRO proxies severity; DROs are issued for up to 4 years, or 10 under special circumstances (i.e., threat of homicide or sexual assault)
- ▶ Sample: all restraining orders filed through civil court; not restricted to parents in family court proceedings

Mechanism

Effect on domestic restraining orders

	All (1)	DRO by Duration		
		< 4 years (2)	4 years (3)	> 4 years (4)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.055 (0.172)	0.127* (0.066)	0.073 (0.125)	-0.046 (0.029)
Pre-treatment Mean	5.524	0.894	3.124	0.029
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

Mechanism

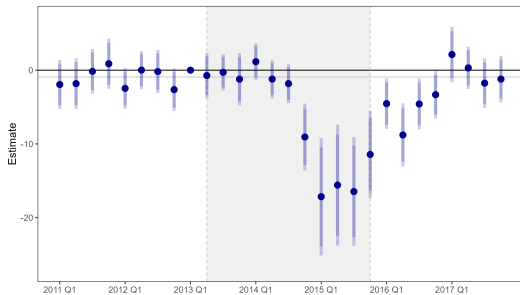
Effect on domestic restraining orders

	DRO by Duration			
	All (1)	< 4 years (2)	4 years (3)	> 4 years (4)
$\tilde{\Delta}Distance$	-0.055 (0.172)	0.127* (0.066)	0.073 (0.125)	-0.046 (0.029)
Pre-treatment Mean	5.524	0.894	3.124	0.029
N	59,808	59,808	59,808	59,808

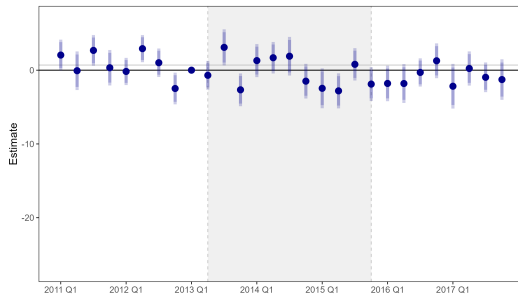
- Stock of active restraining orders does not change; **compositional shift** toward **less severe cases**

Additional results

Event study - Single parenthood



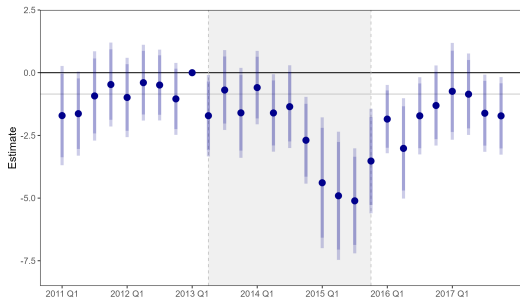
(a) Single parents (contested)



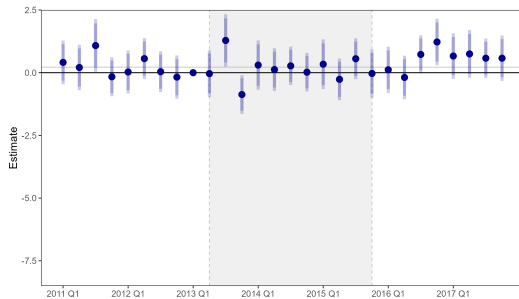
(b) Single parents (voluntary)

Additional results

Event study - Any crime background



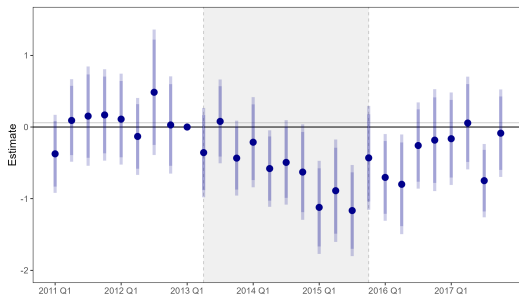
(a) Single parents (contested) - Any crime



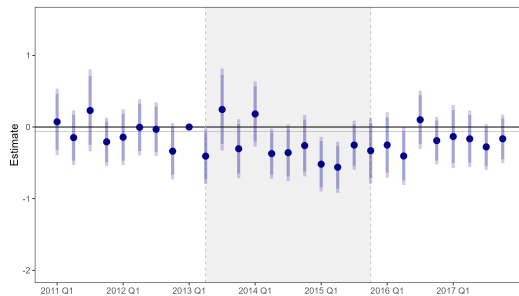
(b) Single parents (voluntary) - Any crime

Additional results

Event study - Domestic violence background



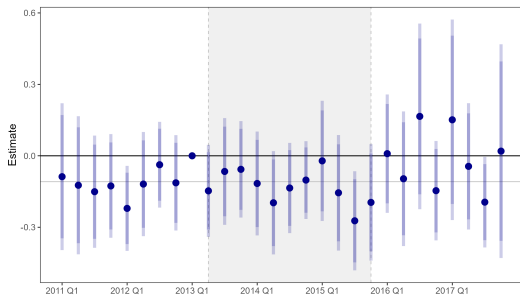
(a) Single parents (contested) - Domestic violence



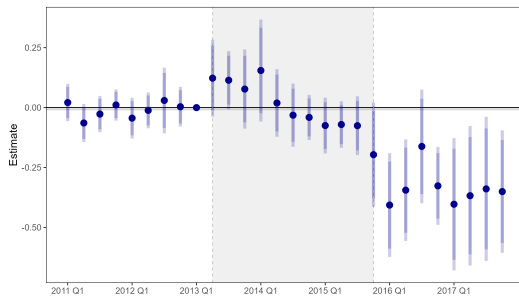
(b) Single parents (voluntary) - Domestic violence

Additional results

Event study - Domestic violence protection



(a) Single parents (contested) - DV protected



(b) Single parents (voluntary) - DV protected

Additional results

Population stability

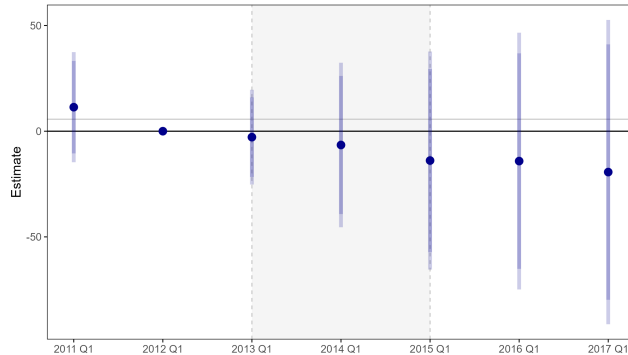


Figure: Total population

Additional results

Population stability

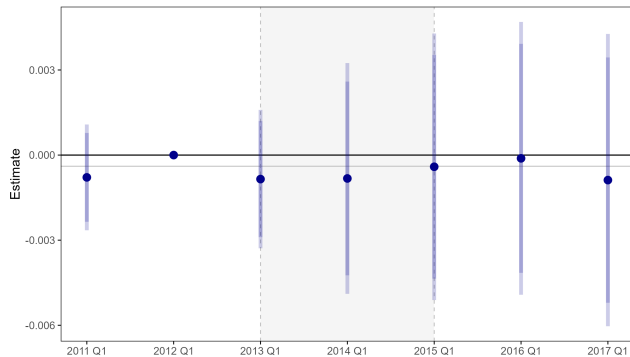


Figure: Population % age 15–44

Additional results

Population stability

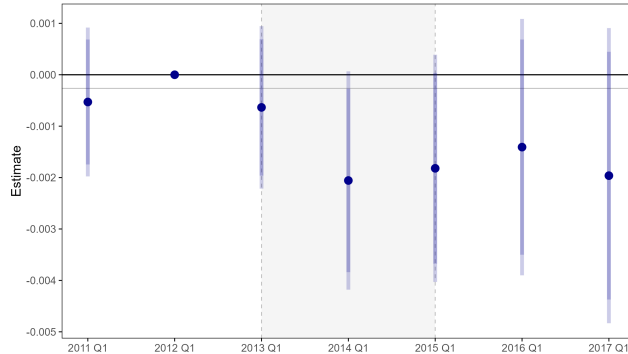


Figure: Population % female

Empirical strategy

Effects by baseline distance

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

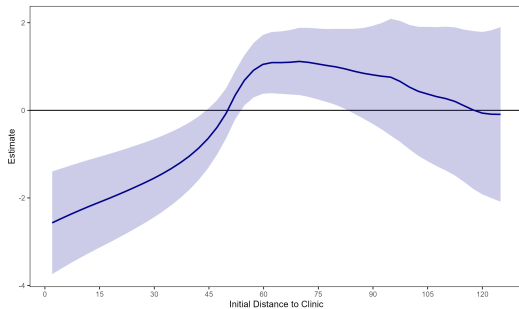
where the zipcode and month fixed effects, γ and θ , are estimated globally and the effects of the change in distance is estimated locally. $\mathcal{K}$ is an Epanechnikov kernel with bandwidth h . In the results that follow, we choose the bandwidth to be 50 miles.

◀ Back main results

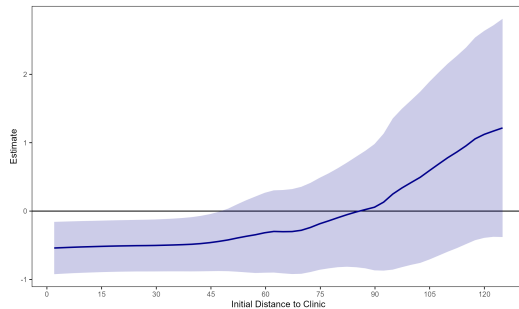
◀ Back add. results

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Single parenthood



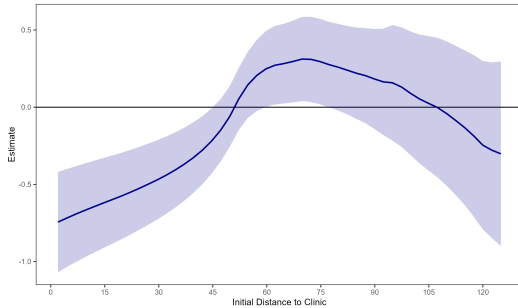
(a) Single parents (contested)



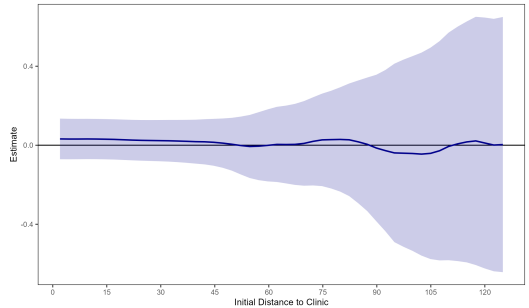
(b) Single parents (voluntary)

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Any crime background



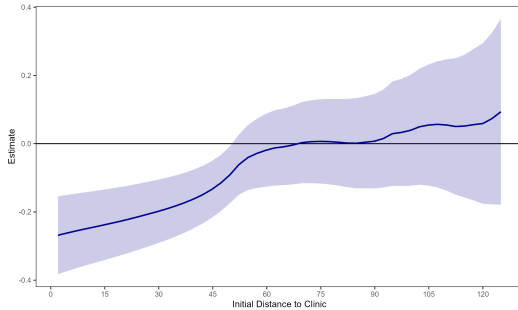
(a) Single parents (contested) - Any crime



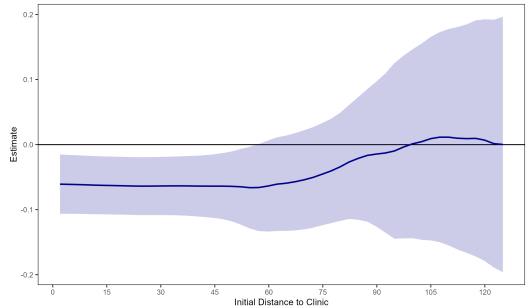
(b) Single parents (voluntary) - Any crime

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Domestic violence background



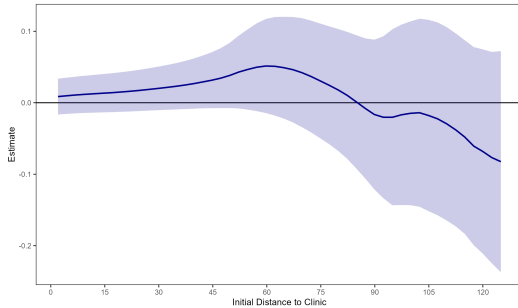
(a) Single parents (contested) - Domestic violence



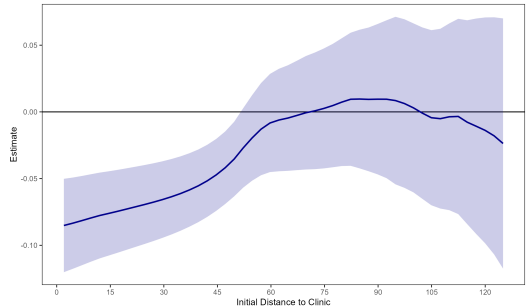
(b) Single parents (voluntary) - Domestic violence

Additional results

Effects by baseline distance - Domestic violence protection



(a) Single parents (contested) - DV protected



(b) Single parents (voluntary) - DV protection

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

[◀ Back](#)

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