

Public Health Implications of Abortion Access

Evidence from the *Roe v. Wade* Overruling

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1. Abortion in the U.S.

- Abortion policy in the U.S. has seen dramatic shifts since the *Dobbs* decision in 2022
 - State-wide shutdowns of abortion clinics
 - Twelve states currently have abortion bans in place
- Abortion clinic shutdowns can have significant short- and long-run implications
 - ~ 204 abortions for every 1,000 live births (CDC 2023)
- We study the impact on the public health sector. Why?
 - Short-term: Immediate strain on hospitals, doctors, and healthcare
 - Long-term: Earliest signals for further implications in education, labor markets, and social security

Research questions:

- How does abortion access affect the incidence on **prenatal health risks for mothers and babies**?
- How can these effects be causally traced to **sociodemographic shifts** in maternal cohorts?

2. Institutional Background

- Pre-Dobbs Laws:** 19 states had pre-existing laws outlawing abortion (see figure 1)
 - 6 states retained laws prior to *Roe v. Wade* 1973
 - 14 states enacted trigger laws after 2000
- June 2022:** U.S. Supreme Court determines that states have right to decide the legality of abortion themselves (*Dobbs v. Jackson Health* 2022)
- June-October 2022:** Closure of abortion clinics in states with abortion bans

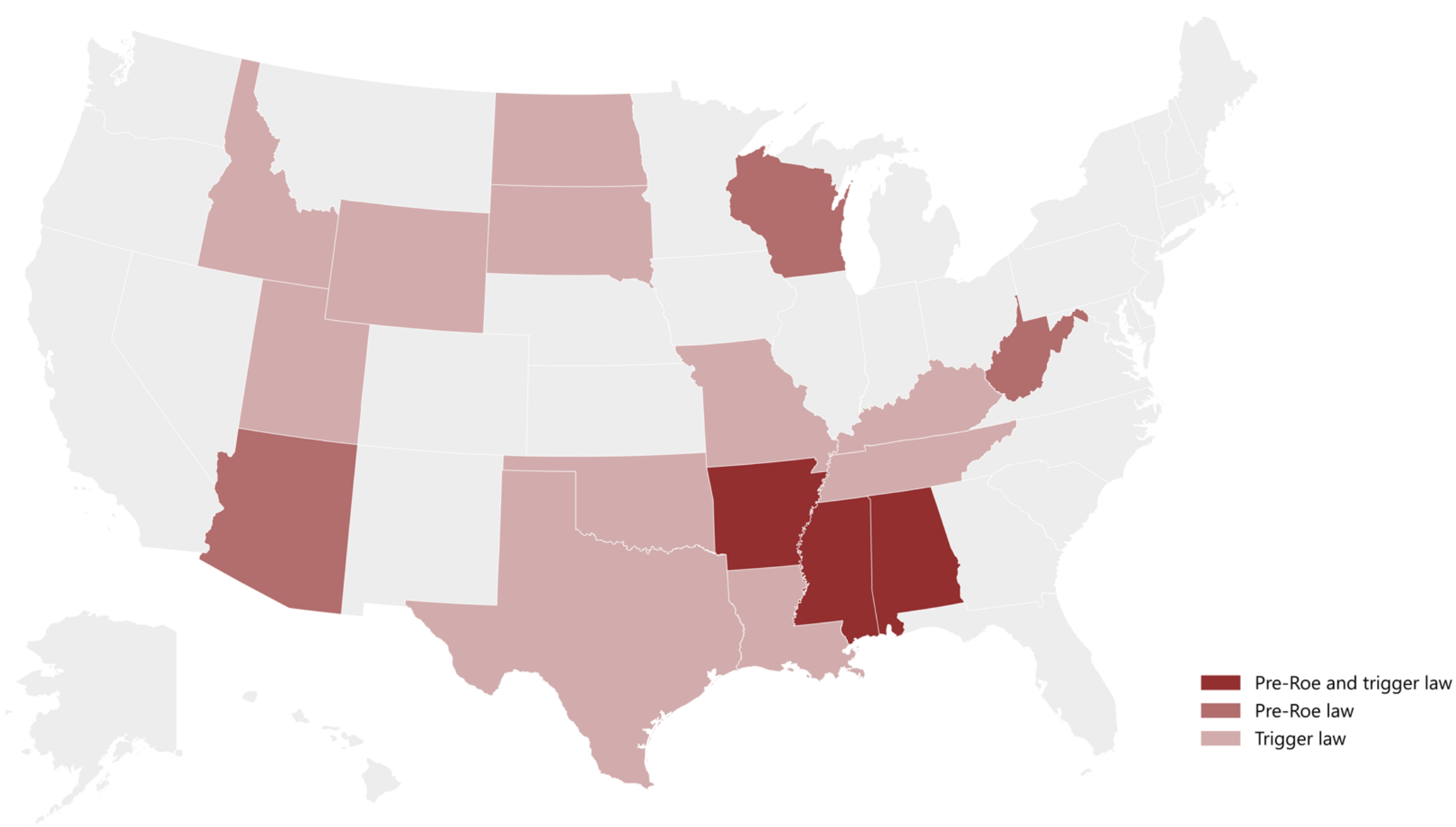


Figure 1. Pre-Dobbs Abortion Laws

3. Data

Myers Abortion Facility Database

- Measure for abortion access: driving distance to the nearest clinical abortion provider
- Unit of observation: month-by-county
- Isolating *Dobbs* impact: Change in distance during the pre-*Dobbs* law implementation period (see figure 2)

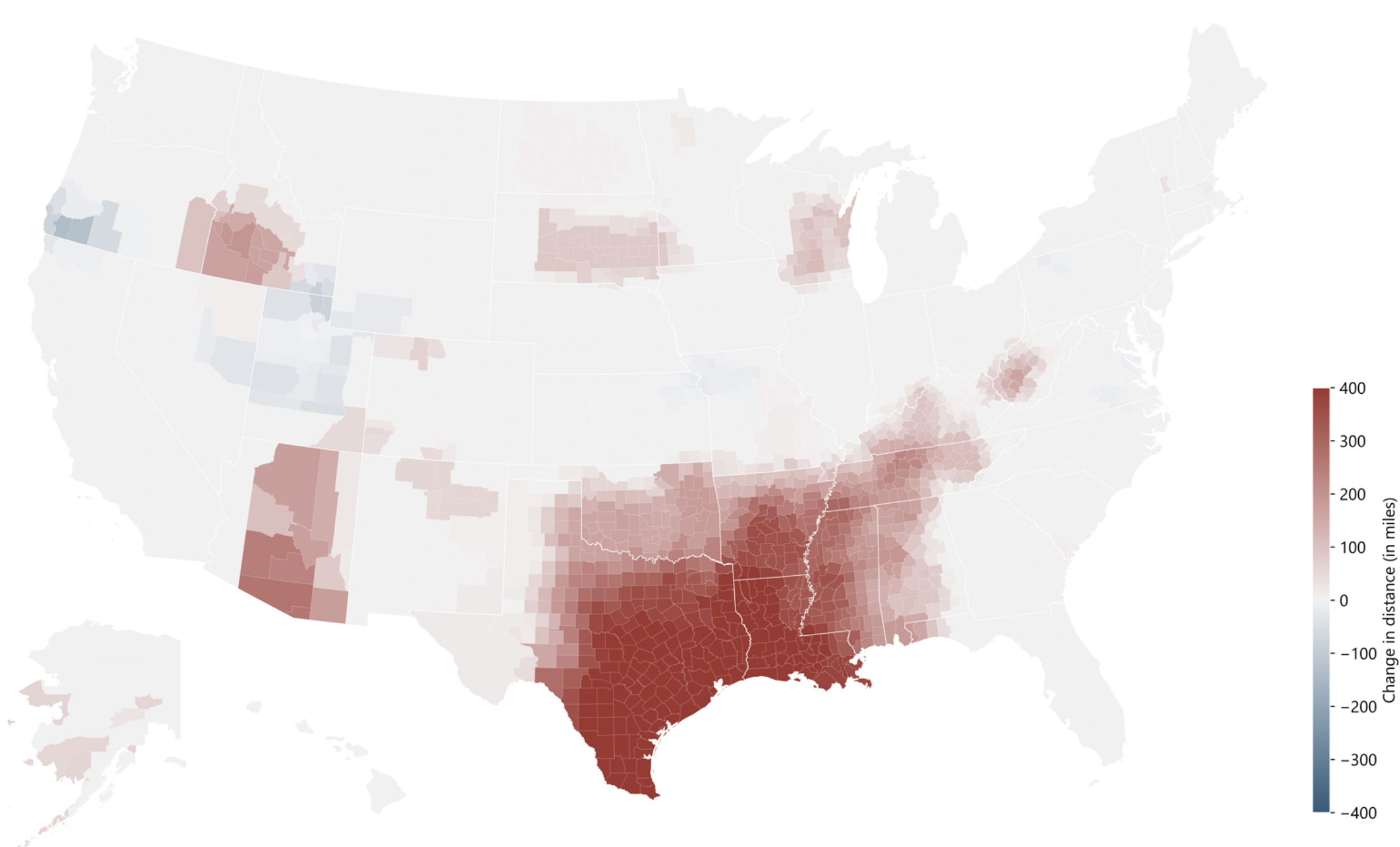


Figure 2. Change-in-Distance from May to October 2022

Vital Statistics Natality Data

- Demographics, maternal risk factors (behavioral and physical) and birth health outcomes
- All birth certificates registered in any state to a U.S. resident
- Unit of observation: month-by-county

4. Empirical Strategy

Main challenge: county abortion access is endogenously determined by market forces

- Pre-*Dobbs* demand for abortions differs across counties such that direct comparisons on the basis of abortion access are biased

Instead use the **change in abortion access** (following Lindo et al. 2020, Myers 2023)

- Comparison of communities who exhibit similar levels of access prior to *Dobbs* but differ in their exposure to out-of-state markets
- Estimated as a continuous difference-in-differences
- Treatment variable: $ChangeDist_t$ denotes change-in-distance from May to October 2022

$$y_{i,t} = \beta(ChangeDist_t \times Post_t) + \gamma_i + \theta_t + \epsilon_{i,t}$$



Figure 3. Illustration of Empirical Strategy

5. Results and Conclusion

- Demographic Effects:**
 - Changes in abortion access broadly lead to a **higher birth rate**.
 - Distributional shift towards births among **younger, unmarried women with lower levels of education**.
- Maternal Risk Factors:**
 - Visual evidence indicates an **increasing prevalence of maternal health conditions** and a small but consistent **increase in maternal morbidity** (health: diabetes, hypertension, prev. preterm birth etc.; morb.: ruptured uterus, transfusion, intensive care etc.)
 - Together, this suggests that **riskier pregnancies** are carried to term.
- Child Health Outcomes:**
 - Little evidence** of significant adverse health outcomes at birth for the baby.

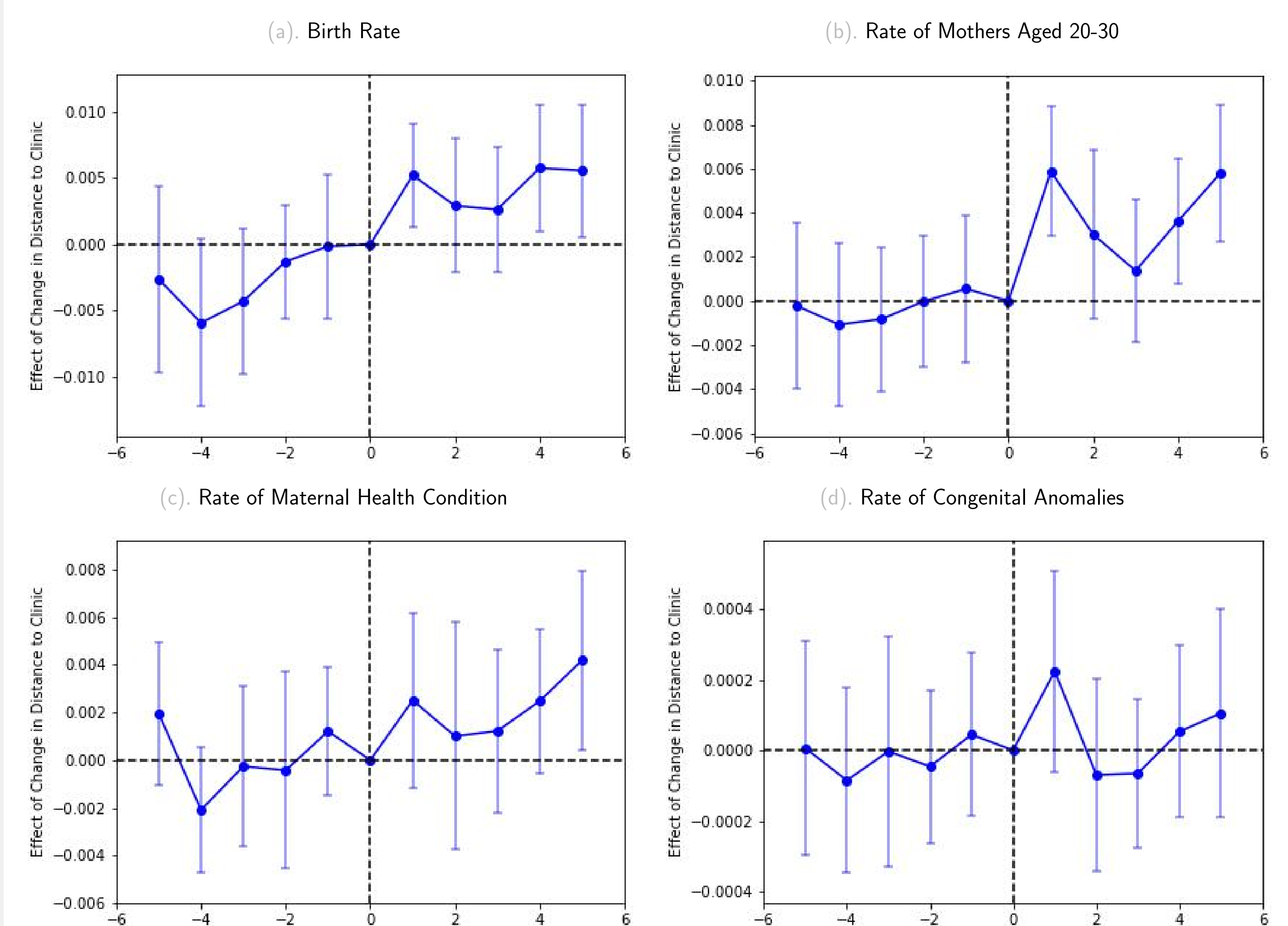


Figure 4. Event Study for Effect of Change in Distance-to-Clinic

Notes: Event studies for the effect of the post-*Dobbs* change in the distance to the nearest abortion clinic on selected outcomes. The omitted period is quarter 0, which corresponds to the second quarter of 2022. The dark blue line indicates estimated coefficients and the light blue lines indicate the 95% confidence intervals, computed from state-clustered standard errors.

References

- CDC. 2023. "Abortion surveillance - United States, 2021." *Surveillance Summaries* 72 (9).
- Dobbs v. Jackson Health*. 2022. No. 19-1392, 597 U.S. June.
- Lindo, Jason M., Caitlin Knowles Myers, Andrea Schlosser, and Scott Cunningham. 2020. "How far is too far? New evidence on abortion clinic closures, access, and abortions." *Journal of Human Resources* 55 (4): 1137–1160.
- Myers, Caitlin. 2023. "Forecasts for a post-Roe America: The effects of increased travel distance on abortions and births." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 43 (1): 39–62.
- Roe v. Wade*. 1973. 410 U.S. 113, January.