

## Trapped by Poverty: Abortion Access for Low-Income Women in the U.S. South Pre and Post-Dobbs Decision

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### ABSTRACT

In the U.S., Women's poverty much higher than men's; and families headed by women are twice as likely to be poor (25.5%) than households headed by men (12.1%) or by married couples (5.3%). In the United States, 1/3 of poor families live on less than \$2 a day—the international measure for deep poverty. This is unique for a highly developed nation like the U.S. Although deep or extreme poverty is decreasing internationally, in the U.S, deep poverty is increasing since 2001. After U.S. welfare reform, poor families have little to no public assistance. Deep poverty increased, food insecurity increased, evictions and homelessness increased. U.S. has conditions for poor families worse than many less developed countries. American deep poverty is concentrated in the most politically conservative states. The ten poorest U.S. states are (in order) Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, West Virginia, Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Georgia, and South Carolina. All are southern with more stringent welfare rules than federal policy requires. The states with the highest deep poverty also most severely restrict abortion access after the Supreme Court issued the Dobbs decision that overturned Roe versus Wade in June 2022. This paper explores how women from southern states must travel to access abortion. For poor women, this travel is impossible given their lack of resources to meet basic needs. Abortion access is an economic justice issue. Laws restricting access to abortion prevents poor women but not middle- or upper-income women from accessing abortion care.

**Keywords:** abortion access, poverty, economic justice, United States, reproductive justice