

6 November 2023

Roe v Wade ruling on abortion rights in the US - a year on

It's been over a year since the overturning of Roe v Wade on abortion rights in the US by the Supreme Court. Steph Landeryou, Welsh Government rep on national women's forum looks at how this has impacted women in the US and across the world.

Trigger warning: this article contains references to abortion and sexual violence.

Abortion has long been a contentious and polarising issue in the US, sparking passionate debates between those who support a woman's right to choose and those who advocate for stricter regulations. The overturning of Roe v Wade in the Dobbs decision last year had significant implications for reproductive freedom for women in the US and across the globe.

There are currently 23 US states that have anti-abortion laws in place. In addition to those that have banned abortion outright, many others have passed laws restricting access to abortion. These include parental notification laws, waiting periods and bans on certain abortion procedures. These restrictions make it more difficult for women to access abortion, especially those who have low incomes or who live in rural areas. It is also threatening IVF treatment in some states and could lead to restrictions on the creation, freezing, and disposal of embryos.

Many in the US are working to protect and expand access to abortion. These efforts include providing financial assistance to women who need to travel to other states for abortion care, challenging restrictive abortion laws in court, and educating the public about abortion rights. 16 million American women now live more than 300 miles away from their nearest abortion clinic.

The global impact of the Dobbs decision is still unfolding but it is already clear that it will have a significant impact on abortion rights around the world. Anti-abortion activists in other countries are using it as justification for restricting or banning abortion. In some countries, such as Poland and Hungary, abortion is already illegal or severely restricted. In other countries, such as Brazil and

Mexico, there are concerns that the Dobbs decision could embolden anti-abortion activists and lead to stricter laws. Family Watch International, a US based group, is very active in Ethiopia and Malawi.

The decision has also been met with criticism from human rights groups and organisations that support abortion rights, arguing that the decision is a setback for women's rights and will have a devastating impact on women's health and well-being. This reminds us that the fight for abortion rights is not over. It is a global fight and will require a global effort to protect and expand abortion rights.