

# Selecting an Abortion Clinic: The Role of Social Myths and Risk Perception in Seeking Abortion Care

Heymann, Orlaith, Tamika Odum, Alison H. Norris, and Danielle Bessett. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, (October 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221465211044413>.

**Ohioans engage in careful deliberations about where to receive abortion care, despite having few clinic options available.**

## Key Findings

We interviewed 41 Ohioans to examine how and why they selected a particular abortion clinic for their care. We found that when selecting a clinic, Ohioans based their decision on:



### Previous positive or negative personal experiences with providers

Returning to a clinic where they had good experiences may help people avoid judgement they anticipate encountering elsewhere.



### Online reviews

Because people may not disclose their abortion to friends and family, nor know which of their friends has had an abortion, online reviews could supplement, or even replace, their usual networks.



### Name recognition and clinic type

People believed that seeking care with nationally-affiliated clinics would protect them from being diverted to a crisis pregnancy center.

Relying on name recognition narrowed the pool of clinic options, sometimes causing people to unknowingly wait longer or travel farther for an appointment at a nationally-affiliated clinic.

## What are Social Myths?

*Collective stories and beliefs that shape people's actions, decisions, and perceptions.*

Social Myths about abortion may include the belief that abortion is inherently dangerous, dirty, or scary.<sup>1</sup> Negative media portrayals of abortion facilities in popular culture also shape public perceptions of abortion care and abortion facilities.<sup>2</sup> Continued restrictions on abortion care reinforce stigmatization of abortion clinics. These myths shape how people evaluate clinics when selecting a facility for care.



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### Clinic location

Traveling to clinics outside their neighborhood or city could minimize risk of being recognized by staff or other patients.

Racialized perceptions of safety or neighborhood desirability informed people's assessments of clinics and shaped where they sought care, showing how race and class impact clinic selection.

Legislation restricting access to abortion made some people uncertain about whether they could legally obtain one in Ohio.

## Public Health Implications

- These considerations serve as metrics of clinic 'safeness' and help people navigate risks they associate with abortion care, such as lack of comfort, safety, privacy, and abortion illegality.
- Our findings are applicable in other healthcare contexts – for instance, perceptions of neighborhood desirability and safety may shape choices about healthcare facilities across different types of care.
- Further research on how people choose care facilities in highly constrained contexts and how social myths inform facility selections can help us anticipate what is important to people seeking care in an increasingly uncertain landscape of narrowing healthcare options.