

A New Border Crossing: Americans Turn to Mexico for Abortions

The text message Cynthia Menchaca received this summer was one she was seeing more and more: A woman living in Texas said she had left a violent relationship only to discover she was pregnant, and she desperately wanted an abortion. The woman had learned that Ms. Menchaca could send her abortion pills from Mexico, where the procedure has been decriminalized in several states.

But the growing U.S. demand for abortion care is not limited to deliveries of medication, according to advocates like Ms. Menchaca, who lives in Coahuila state in northeastern Mexico. Clinics in Tijuana and Mexico City, as well as activists in the northwestern city of Hermosillo, say they have seen women crossing the border from Texas, Louisiana and Arizona seeking access to abortion. (...)

More than a year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, Mexican abortion-rights activists have seen a rise of American women crossing the border to seek abortions — crystallizing the shifting policies of two nations that once held vastly different positions on the procedure.

For decades, abortion was criminalized in Mexico and much of Latin America with few exceptions, while in the United States, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling established a constitutional right to abortion. Today, Mexico’s Supreme Court has decriminalized abortion nationwide, making it legally accessible in federal institutions and eliminating federal penalties for the procedure. Twelve of the country’s 32 states have also decriminalized abortion, and activists say they have renewed momentum to push local officials in the remaining states. By comparison, more than 20 American states currently ban or restrict the procedure after 18 weeks of pregnancy or earlier, with 14 states completely forbidding the procedure in almost all circumstances.

Mexican activists, anticipating the Supreme Court could overturn *Roe* when it was still weighing the case, began organizing and have established an underground system, sending thousands of pills north and helping women travel south across the border. They say the longstanding restrictions in Latin America prepared them to now handle the influx of demand.

“The truth is that years ago, we neither had nor envisioned collaboration with the United States,” said Verónica Cruz, who 20 years ago helped found the reproductive-rights organization *Las Libres*, which means “the free ones.” (...) Ms. Cruz initially planned to help shuttle women in the United States to Mexico but found it to be too financially burdensome both for her organization and those seeking abortions. She has instead focused on sending mifepristone and misoprostol, the two-drug regimen to end a pregnancy, over the border to American women, particularly those living in states that ban the procedure or ban providers from prescribing the pills. (...)

Since the lifting of *Roe*, Ms. Cruz said she had helped roughly 20,000 women in 23 states secure the abortion pills. She said she would continue to help these women even as certain states move to penalize those who assist with abortions. (...) While the Food and Drug Administration said that abortion drugs can be delivered by mail, several states banned this shipping method, or require that the drugs be dispensed by providers in person. (...)

Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Edyra Espriella, *The New York Times*, September 28th, 2023