
Notes on state trends in abortion in the United States

30 May 2017

Wm. Robert Johnston

Abstract: This document discusses results on state/regional trends in abortion numbers in the United States from 1965 to 2015.

The following analysis is based on state-level abortion figures and estimates for U.S. states from 1965 to 2015, by state of occurrence. The methodology and results are described in AWR Working Paper 13 (Johnston, 2017). In brief, AGI estimates for available years are adopted; these are compared to official figures (state agency or CDC) to estimate adjustments for incomplete official reporting; for recent years, a trend analysis is used based on a clustering analysis in post-2000 trends in AGI estimates.

From these estimates, trends were constructed by scaling each state's abortion numbers to the average of the highest three years from 1974 to 2015.

Some states were grouped into regions based on both geographical proximity and similarity in certain trend characteristics, primarily the speed of the rise in 1967-1977 and the relative size of the decrease from the peak to 2015. Regions used are listed in Table 1.

Figure 1 shows the scaled trends by state/region, smoothed with a 5-year Hanning window.

The following trends are evident:

- New York and the District of Columbia legalized abortion early, and both peaked before 1974 as they were substantial "abortion tourism" sites, i.e. a large fraction of abortions were obtained by non-residents in these years.
- Kansas also legalized abortion early and saw significant non-resident abortions.
- The Pacific states collectively saw abortions rise before 1973.
- All other regions saw their initial abortion rises more in connection with the Roe v. Wade decision, with the fastest rise for Illinois/Ohio/Pennsylvania and the slowest for the Southwest states.
- The timing of peak abortions has varied greatly even apart from abortion tourism states. For example, the Great Lakes states peaked around 1980, Pacific states peaked around 1990, and the Southeast states peaked in the early-to-mid 2000s.

- All regions currently have had abortion numbers drop from peak levels, but by amounts varying from 20% to 85%. Southeast and Southwest states have remained near peak for 20 years and show the smallest declines (20-25%). Moderate to larger declines (40-65%) are associated with states that peaked earlier, and the largest drop (85%) is for the District of Columbia.
- Most regions have shown declining abortion trends since 1990, with the exception of Southeast and Southwest states.
- Only the Southwest and Rocky Mountain states showed a trend of increasing abortions in the early 2000s, although other regions (e.g. the Southeast) showed flat trends.
- Great Lakes west (Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota) is the only region showing a trend of increasing abortions in the last 5 years.

Table 1. United States regions with similar abortion trends, 1965-2015.

region	states	Percent of US total abortions, 1965-2015
New England	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont	4.9
New York	New York	13.8
New Jersey	New Jersey	4.0
Great Lakes E	Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania	11.2
Great Lakes W	Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota	5.7
DC	District of Columbia	1.5
Southeast	Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia	15.7
South	Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee	5.5
Texas	Texas	6.2
Kansas	Kansas	0.9
Midwest	Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin	3.7
Rocky Mt	Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming	1.7
Southwest	Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah	2.7
Pacific	AK, CA, HI, OR, WA	22.5

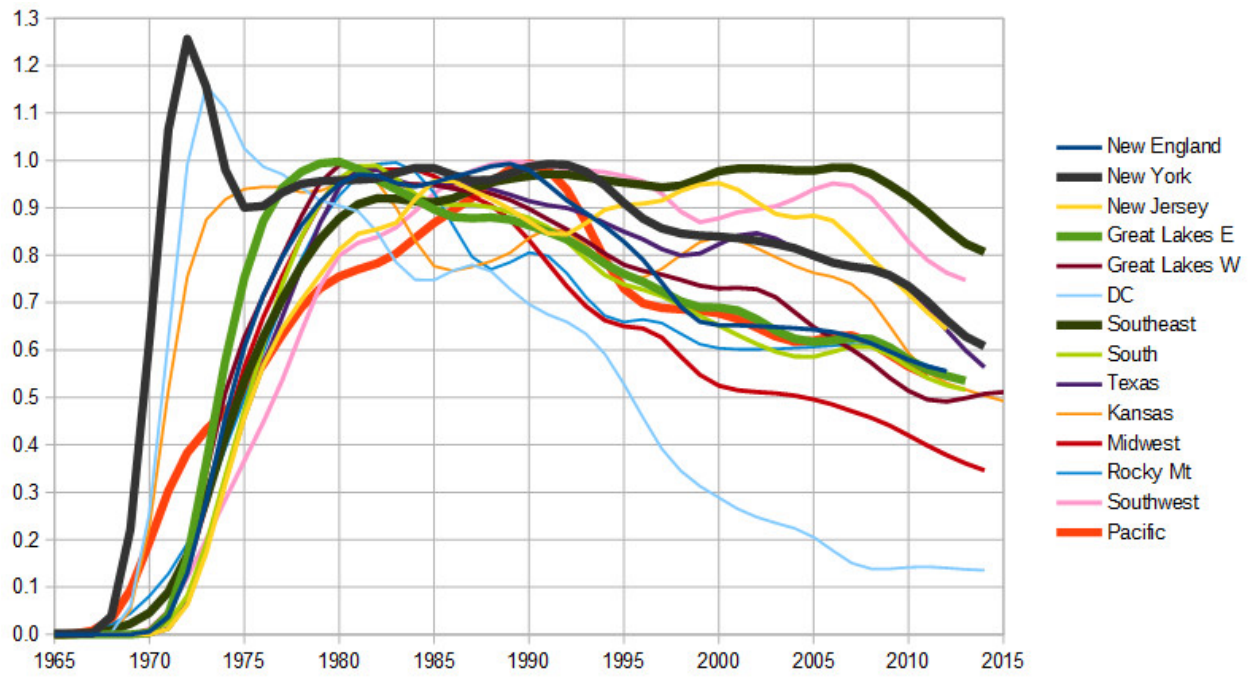


Figure 1. Scaled regional trends in abortion numbers, United States.

References

- Johnston, Wm. Robert, 30 May 2017, "United States: Estimated abortions, 2012-2015," Abortion Worldwide Report Working Paper 13.