

# GUIDE TO THE INTERNET POST-ROE ONE YEAR LATER

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* overturned the constitutional right to an abortion as established 49 years prior in *Roe v. Wade*. Since then, the state of abortion access in the United States has changed enormously, with some states banning abortion, others expanding protections, and people everywhere fighting tooth and nail to protect their right to make their own reproductive decisions.

Unfortunately, tech—the platforms and services we use to connect, find information, and plan many parts of our lives—has not changed. Digital trails can be used to criminalize our reproductive choices unless tech companies keep our data safe, which they still largely are not. And tech’s long-standing disinformation problem continues to prevent people from finding the information they need, even as it becomes both more necessary and more difficult to find sources that are trustworthy and secure.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In this guide, we will lay out the ways that tech interacts with abortion care a year into a post-Roe world, starting with personal impacts and ending with how it affects our society as a whole. You can use this guide to:

- 1 Expand your analysis of reproductive justice issues to include the ways that tech impact abortion access
- 2 Help identify a new or additional target for a campaign
- 3 Share the resources and examples with your community, organizing base, or clients

# HOW TECH INFLUENCES ABORTION RIGHTS

## FOR INDIVIDUALS

Regardless of our race, economic circumstances, or the state we live in, we all deserve the right to search for answers to sensitive medical and personal questions without fear of our data being used against us or being served dangerous false information. But big tech companies are refusing to do their part. Here's where that leaves us:

- **It's up to us to protect our own data;** it can and has been handed over by tech companies to the police to criminalize abortion seekers.<sup>[1]</sup> Protecting our data on our own takes time, specialized knowledge, and resources to access encrypted tech tools.<sup>[2]</sup> This protection should be universal, without us having to do the work.
- **Abortion-seekers are at risk due to big tech's current unwillingness to protect user data.** In 2022, a journalist was able to buy data from a broker that detailed who visited abortion providers, where they came from, and where they went afterwards.<sup>[3]</sup> As long as tech refuses to invest in data security, this type of data will continue to remain accessible, allowing people to buy data on, for example, who is crossing state lines to access abortion care.
- **People seeking abortions are met with inaccurate search results because tech companies are not combating disinformation.** Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) market themselves as reproductive care providers but provide only shame-based coercion to mislead abortion seekers. Yet they are permitted to rise to the top of the results when people search for abortion clinics.
- **Abortion seekers have had their data tracked by Meta** (parent company of Facebook) when they happen to find themselves on the websites of CPCs. This is an egregious violation of privacy that allows further user exploitation.<sup>[4]</sup>
- People use tech to access certain abortion tools, including abortion pills and medical consultations, from home via telehealth services, volunteer pill distributors, and online pharmacies—but that data is not secure, and **some telehealth services and apps have sold or shared client data.**<sup>[5]</sup>

## IN COMMUNITIES

Before Dobbs, there were already many factors that influenced which communities had easy access to abortions, such as the need for time off work, having access to capital and healthcare, and discrimination in medical care. Working-class, under-insured, Black and brown, and LGBTQ communities have always had a harder time getting abortion care as a result of these barriers.<sup>[6]</sup> Now, many abortion seekers need to travel even longer distances and jump through even more restrictive legislation-driven hoops to get abortions, further increasing the cost. Tech exacerbates these inequalities. Here's how:

- **Spanish-speaking communities are targeted by anti-abortion groups through online disinformation campaigns.**<sup>[7,8]</sup> That means these groups are more likely to see ads for and end up seeking care at anti-abortion CPCs instead of real clinics.
- **Abortion seekers who live in states where abortion is illegal had to worry about being reported by vigilantes even before Dobbs.** But the practice is now not only legal but often facilitated via internet pathways, like data purchases and anonymous websites to submit "tips."<sup>[9]</sup>

## AT THE STATE LEVEL

In many states, tech is a battleground between politicians who seek to further restrict reproductive freedoms and those who want to protect them. Abortion resources on the internet will remain contested at the state level in 2023 and 2024 as anti-choice legislators try to restrict how abortion-seekers find help.

- **Abortion-seekers in 13 states have to contend with laws restricting the use of telehealth to obtain abortion medicines, obstructing a technological solution to abortion access.**<sup>[10]</sup>
- **Some state governments are trying to prevent people from getting abortion information by restricting access to the internet while other states are trying to protect users.** Legislators in South Carolina and Texas have introduced bills that seek to prohibit websites that provide abortion resources.<sup>[11,12]</sup> Washington State legislators are protecting residents with a state law that requires companies to get users' explicit consent before sharing their data.<sup>[13]</sup>

## IN SOCIETY

State and federal laws, court decisions, and on-the-ground conditions are in constant flux; in February of this year, almost half the people in the country did not know whether abortion was legal in their state or not.<sup>[14]</sup>

## WE ALL DEPEND ON THE INTERNET TO ACCESS TRUSTWORTHY AND ACCURATE INFORMATION.

Right now, tech companies are facilitating confusion and obstructing our ability to organize in support of abortion rights across the country. This makes it harder for us to spread truthful information and to push back against the restrictions. Here are some of the ways:

- People looking to create reproductive- and abortion-related art are finding abortion-related prompts censored by AI art tools.<sup>[15]</sup>
- Facebook and Instagram users seeking to spread the information that abortion pills can be mailed had their posts repeatedly censored by Meta.<sup>[16]</sup>

Like the states, US Congress is a site of active struggle at the intersection of abortion and tech:

- People who use apps that retain health data, including period trackers, navigation apps that log visits to abortion clinics, etc., would have their data protected by the “My Body, My Data” bill first introduced last year.<sup>[17]</sup> Other data security bills would apply to abortion data as well. Unfortunately, the current Congress is unlikely to move on data security.

**On the other hand, people also find community, connection, and abortion support via tech.**<sup>[18]</sup> Abortion seekers and supporters use subreddits [r/abortion](#) and [r/auntienetwork](#) to find care and accurate information. People can visit several websites to access abortion medicine securely. And organizers still rely on tech platforms as key tools for outreach and amplification to help plan rallies, protests, abortion clinic support, and other forms of resistance.

# WHAT NEXT?

After Roe was overturned, Kairos launched an ongoing campaign to get tech to stop working against our reproductive freedoms. **The internet should be a place where people seeking help and support can do so without fear of being tracked and surveilled.** Our demands of Google and Meta remains:

1

Protect users seeking reproductive healthcare by stopping the collection and retention of individual location, search data, and messages.

2

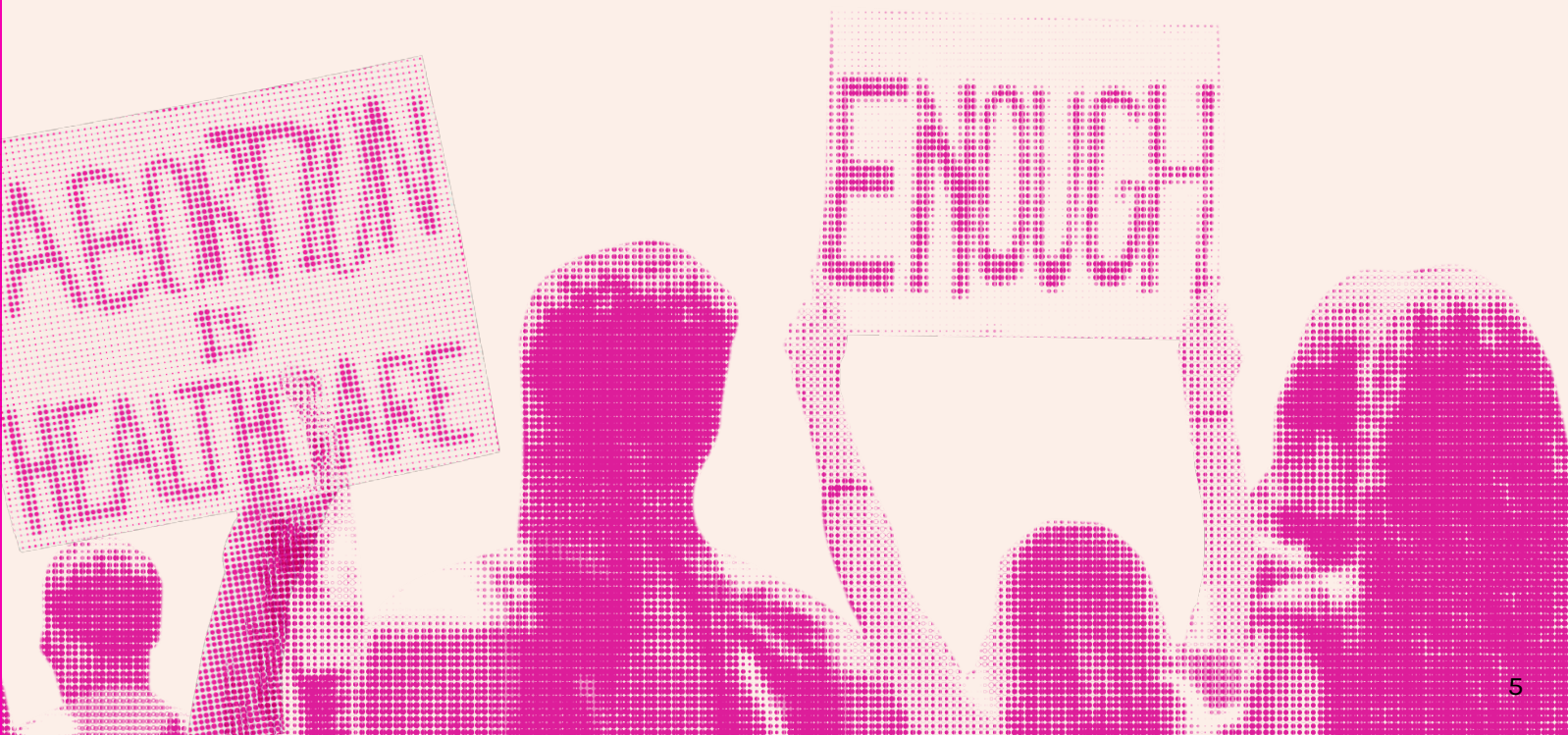
Publicly address how they will handle law enforcement requests for data, scrutinize warrants to make sure they are not overbroad, and alert users when warrants come through.

3

Remove abortion disinformation in all languages.

## DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE OR JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN?

Email us at [info@kairosfellows.org](mailto:info@kairosfellows.org) to connect as an organization, and [sign our petition](#) to keep up with the campaign as an individual.



# RESOURCES

Protect yourself and your community:

## DIGITAL DEFENSE FUND

Resources and how-tos for digital security  
[digitaldefensefund.org/learn](https://digitaldefensefund.org/learn)

## ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION

Data resources and how-tos for abortion seekers and abortion providers  
[eff.org/deeplinks/2022/06/security-and-privacy-tips-people-seeking-abortion](https://eff.org/deeplinks/2022/06/security-and-privacy-tips-people-seeking-abortion)

## EXPOSE FAKE CLINICS

A coalition of abortion organizers and abortion access organizations offering concrete steps to fighting online disinformation  
[exposefakeclinics.com](https://exposefakeclinics.com)

## INEEDANA

Up-to-date information on available abortion providers and abortion legality by location, age, weeks of pregnancy, etc.  
[ineedana.com](https://ineedana.com)

## PLAN C

Reliable resource for finding abortion pills by mail  
[plancpills.org](https://plancpills.org)

## AIDACCESS

A coalition of doctors and activists to help people get abortion pills  
[aidaccess.org](https://aidaccess.org)

## ONLINE ABORTION RESOURCE SQUAD (OARS)

Volunteer collective of abortion professionals who run the r/abortion subreddit  
[abortionsquad.org](https://abortionsquad.org)

## IF/WHEN/HOW

Legal advocates and a helpline for reproductive rights, including a bail fund, helpline, and legal support for those criminalized for self-managed abortions  
[ifwhenhow.org](https://ifwhenhow.org)

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